

SATURDAY

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THE INDEPENDENT

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Millions to benefit in home loans war

Rates drop to 6.25% in battle for customers

NIC CICUTTI

Millions of house buyers are set to benefit from the cheapest home-loan deals since the 1960s as the escalating price war between lenders led Bradford & Bingley yesterday to cut mortgage rates to a record low of 6.25 per cent.

Its move placed the two biggest lenders, Halifax and Abbey National, under intense pressure to reduce their mortgage rates even further.

Their resolve will be tested by other large and mid-ranking building societies in the next few weeks. Several confirmed yesterday they are preparing to give "loyalty" bonuses to members.

One building society chief, who refused to be named, said: "We will force them to say the point where they have to say

lowest standard rate anywhere in the country."

The bonus packages on offer from societies, including reductions in loan costs and hikes in savings rates, are part of societies' defence against de-mutualisation or takeovers.

David Charlton, assistant general manager at Skipton Building Society, which led the market with a reduction for its 60,000 borrowers in December, said: "We are preparing a package of measures and it is almost certain that we will be cutting mortgages even further. We have said for some time that we believed there must be a narrowing of the margin between savings and mortgage rates."

Bradford & Bingley led the pack last week by cutting rates for its 600,000 branch network borrowers to 7.24 per cent. Yesterday's cut is an offer to borrowers who book a mortgage through the society's telephone service.

Nationwide, the second-largest society, said it too would be offering a bonus package to its 8 million members within weeks. Britannia, another top-10 society, will do so in the spring.

A spokesman at Bristol & West said: "Until recently, we had considered that defending mutuality lay in providing competitive pricing both in savings and mortgages. We are now considering the issue of loyalty bonuses and will make an announcement as soon as appropriate."

Birmingham Midshires said it was also considering a similar package for its 750,000 investors and 160,000 borrowers although a spokesman was unable to say when a decision might be reached.

But Ken Culley, chief executive at Portman Building Society, argued: "Our defence of mutuality means we try to balance the interests of both savers and borrowers. It is a matter of concern to me that the effects of mortgage rate reductions are always felt by savers. We believe that borrowers have had a good deal and want to defend our savers, who are seven times as numerous."

The initiative by Direct Line and Bradford & Bingley adds a new dimension to the price war. Their undercutting of traditional lenders is the result of telephone-based operations doing away with costly overheads, including branch networks.

Although still relatively small, telephone lenders are grabbing an increasingly large slice of the market. Direct Line, which has been offering mortgages for less than a year, has already lent about £210m.



Geoffrey Lister: 'Lowest standard rate anywhere'

whose side they are on. Are they into making profits for their existing and future shareholders, or will they defend the interests of their members?"

Both lenders, with 3.2 million borrowers between them, said that after spearheading several price cuts in the past few months they had no intention of following suit this time.

A Halifax spokeswoman said: "We have no plans to cut our rates. Having said that, we would want to remain competitive with the market-place."

Bradford & Bingley's move yesterday followed an earlier rate cut to 6.49 per cent by Direct Line, the telephone-based financial services company.

The society's response lowers the cost of a typical £50,000 interest-only mortgage to £237 a month from March, when the reductions take effect. Direct Line's mortgage will cost £246 a month from mid-February.

Geoffrey Lister, the society's chief executive, said: "We believe the new rate for our 'phone-alone' mortgage is the

Winds from Siberia put Britain into deep freeze



Extreme weather conditions caused one death and hundreds of accidents yesterday, as Siberian winds returned to Britain, plunging temperatures in nearly 20 degrees below zero, with worse to come. A

26-year-old woman was killed when a car skidded on ice at Pyecombe, near Haywards Heath in West Sussex. The worst affected areas were in south Wales, where temperatures dived to minus 17C with the wind-chill

factor. North-east England, Humberside, Merseyside and southern Scotland all had snow, which combined with freezing winds on Thursday night to cause electricity blackouts. Report and forecast, page 2

Kevin Maxwell faces second fraud trial

JOHN WILLCOCK
Financial Correspondent

Kevin Maxwell's legal battle to clear his name is set to drag on for another 18 months or longer after the Serious Fraud Office yesterday sensationally declared it was prosecuting him on further charges of fraud, despite his acquittal on similar charges a week ago.

Mr Maxwell accused the Government of interference in seeking another trial, which prompted a denial from the Attorney General, who has ultimate responsibility for the SFO.

His counsel said this would mean another trial starting in February 1997, and lasting even longer than the eight month trial which ended last week at a cost of £2.4m to the taxpayer.

Alun Jones QC bitterly attacked the decision as "nothing less than an outrage". It would mean Mr Maxwell had been under the strain of having to defend himself for five-and-a-half years.

The decision sparked disbelief from observers, who had assumed the SFO would abandon any further action at yesterday's hearing. The SFO was heavily criticised over its handling of the first trial in which Kevin and Ian Maxwell and former Maxwell aide Larry Trachtenberg were all acquitted of conspiracy to defraud Maxwell pension funds.



Kevin Maxwell: 'I am the victim of a political decision'

Following yesterday's decision, Kevin, Mr Trachtenberg and former treasurer Albert Fuller face charges of conspiracy to defraud. The charges relate to shares in Berlitz held by the Maxwell business empire, which it is alleged were pledged to a number of different banks as collateral for loans. As a result the banks lost over £100m, it is alleged.

Former Mirror Group finance director Michael Stoney is also to face trial, on two charges of false accounting. All charges against Kevin's elder brother, Ian, were dropped. The SFO claimed yesterday

in a heated hearing that a second trial could start this October and would be shorter than the first.

Kevin, visibly shaken by the SFO's unexpected decision, told reporters after the Old Bailey hearing of his "immense disappointment".

"I believe that I am the victim of a political decision taken by politicians in the run up to a general election. I don't believe the interests of justice will be served by a second trial. I take a lot of courage from the jury's verdict," he said.

"I came out of court protesting my innocence and will fight these new challenges with the same vigour, determination and absolute confidence that I will be proven innocent if these charges ever come to court."

The Attorney General then issued a statement: "The law officers completely refute the suggestion by Kevin Maxwell that the decision of the Serious Fraud Office to proceed with certain outstanding charges on the indictment was the result of political influence."

The decision was taken by the director of the SFO after taking advice from leading and junior counsel in the case.

"As the SFO made clear in its announcement this morning, the law officers were also consulted. This is normal in cases of great public importance in

view of their statutory responsibility for the work of the SFO. They supported the director's decision."

Kevin's defence counsel successfully applied for a further hearing to decide whether a second trial would be an "abuse of process" or should be allowed to go ahead.

Yesterday's controversial decision by the SFO was taken just half an hour before the hearing, according to the SFO's counsel Richard Lissack.

Mr Jones told the court that the continued prosecution was oppressive and the defence would be seeking to have it dropped on the grounds of abuse of process.

The SFO also decided not to go ahead against former Maxwell accountant Robert Bunn - who was dropped from the original trial after developing heart problems - because of his continuing ill health, Mr Lissack said.

The DTI inspectors' report on the flotation of the Mirror Group in April 1991 may also be delayed by another trial.

Lord Justice Phillips said he had written to the DTI, who replied that they were ready to start sending out parts of the Mirror Group report for comment to people named in it. This would have to wait until after the abuse hearing, he said.

Drama in court, page 4



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IN BRIEF

Cost-cutting quashed

The Government's attempt to redraw the boundaries of two estuaries and save £100m in sewage clean-up costs was quashed. **Page 6**

Adams accuses Major

The Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, has accused the Prime Minister of putting his hold on political power before peace. **Page 2**

'Outcast' husband

A woman whose husband is the first man in Britain to be ostracised by the Jewish community, said she was helping other Jewish women. **Page 3**

Prisoners are paid £5,000 for riot 'trauma'

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

Seven former inmates of Strangeways prison, in Manchester, have been paid about £5,000 each by the Home Office for the trauma they said they suffered during the riots in the jail in 1990.

The decision to compensate the offenders in out-of-court settlements drew an angry reaction from MPs who warned the move could open the flood gates to scores of similar claims. A victims' organisation said it was "justice back to front".

An eighth former Strangeways prisoner is having his claim considered, while a prison officer has been paid an undisclosed sum following the mass disturbances at the jail.

In what are believed to be the first cases of this kind, the inmates - all since released - said they underwent personality changes because of the riots.

The Home Office said settlements were made because of the huge cost to the taxpayers if the cases had come to trial. A Prison Service spokesman said it was a decision of the Prison Board, but that Michael

Howard, the Home Secretary, would have been informed.

The former inmates said they suffered post-traumatic stress disorder from the violent scenes in the jail. Terence Jeggo, 27, of Manchester, who was given £4,500, said the Prison Service breached their duty of care.

Mr Jeggo was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue two prisoners from a burning cell during the riot. He said he suffered post-traumatic stress disorder from a belief he had left them to die. Mr Jeggo, who served two years for wounding, said yesterday: "My personali-

ty changed totally. My mother said before I went into Strangeways I was a human being and when I came out I wasn't."

Dawn Bromley, of Justice For Victims, responded: "What about the stress and pain caused to the victims and families of victims by their actions? Justice has got everything back-to-front."

Richard Tilt, the Prison Service acting director-general, said: "In seven cases we have concluded that it would be reasonable to make *ex gratia* payment."

Sir Ivan Lawrence, chairman of the Commons Home

Affairs Select Committee, criticised the move as "absurd".

But Stephen Shaw, director of the Prison Reform Trust, said the prison authorities had a duty of care. "Where that is not forthcoming, inmates have the same right to seek redress or compensation as any other member of the public."

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Jew 'banned' by community for blocking divorce

REBECCA FOWLER

A woman whose estranged husband yesterday became the first man in Britain to be formally ostracised by the Jewish community, said last night that she felt she was helping other Jewish women by pressing the action against him.

Moses David, 43, from Mill Hill, north London was alone yesterday, after being officially ostracised by the entire Jewish community on account of his acrimonious divorce from his wife, Rachel, aged 30.

The official order to the community to avoid all contact with Mr David, an unemployed computer analyst, was issued last week after he repeatedly failed to attend a Jewish court hearing over his refusal to grant Mrs David a religious divorce, known as a *get*.

Under the order, which has been posted in synagogues near his home, his fellow Jews are forbidden from sitting within six feet of Mr David, entering his home, or eating with him.

As Mr David's three children were dropped off at his sister's home, to visit him for the Sabbath yesterday, it appeared they

would be among the few guests that he will be receiving.

Although Mrs David gained a civil divorce from her husband four years ago, she cannot consider herself free to enter into another relationship until he grants her a *get*. Under Jewish law the marriage contract is literally torn into two pieces, to signify that it is over.

Mrs David, who works as a purchasing buyer for a medical equipment company, met her husband when she was only 16. They were married 13 years ago.

To many Jewish women, Mrs David's plight is a painful and fitting tale of the trials of Judaism in modern Britain.

Jewish leaders, including Dr Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, have been attempting to change the 2,000-year-old law in order to allow women an easier route to divorce.

In her attempt to secure a divorce, Mrs David appealed to the Federation of Synagogues, a separate body to the Sephardi synagogue that Mr David attends. But he failed to respond to three summonses from Beth Din, the Jewish court.

"These declarations are issued all the time in the United

States. But in England we're much more conservative, and Jewish women have to suffer as a result," Mrs David said.

The Federation of Synagogues said yesterday that it was anxious to resolve the differences between the Davids as fairly as possible.

However, the leaders cannot make a judgement unless Mr David attends. "This law goes back hundreds of years and it inspires tremendous social pressure, even in our society, which is much freer now," said Dayan Berel Berkovits, of the Federation of Synagogues.

"We're not trying to damn this man, we're trying to use a sanction that is part of Jewish law to induce him to attend the Beth Din."

Mr David was not available for comment yesterday. The synagogue that he attends has not decided whether it will join in the *nidud* (order), and display it for members.

The head of the Sephardic Beth Din, Dayan Pinchas Tolodono, told the *Jewish Chronicle*: "I've never issued a *Nidui*, and I hope I never will. I don't think this will solve the problem."

Chief Rabbi should quit now, says Dixon's head

ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The head of the Dixons store group, one of the most prominent Jewish businessmen in Britain, has demanded that the Chief Rabbi resign.

In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, Sir Stanley Kalus, who was one of the most influential backers of Dr Jonathan Sacks for the post of Chief Rabbi when he was appointed five years ago, now says that Dr Sacks has failed to keep his electoral pledges about improving the position of women in orthodox Judaism and improving relations with the liberal and reform factions, and accuses him of dithering.

"Leadership is about firm convictions, clear strategy, and a clear, communicable action plan. Populism and survival are not on the agenda of a true leader. In fairness to himself, the Chief Rabbi should consider retiring from office. He is an academic by nature, and his talents could be immeasurably better used," he said.

Letter highlights the crisis facing a Jewish community split into factions

Sir Stanley's call roused no noticeable enthusiasm in the Jewish community. One observer from the conservative but not quite orthodox Masorti movement, which has been bitterly attacked by the Chief Rabbi, said he believed Sir Stanley had got into "a kind of personal tiff" with Dr Sacks.

However, the controversy highlighted the considerable pressures within the Jewish community, and especially on the United Synagogue, the traditionally gentle, almost Anglican branch of orthodoxy which the Chief Rabbi heads.

The United Synagogue still contains about two-thirds of Britain's 300,000 intermittently observant Jews, but intermarriage seems to many observers to threaten the survival of the Jewish community. Dr Sacks has written a book

pointing out that the Jewish population of Britain has declined from 450,000 in the late 1950s as a result of intermarriage. Orthodox Jews count only as Jewish children whose mothers are Jews.

Two broad strategies have arisen to deal with this crisis. The first has been restrictive: within orthodoxy there has been a great rise in the number and influence of ultra-orthodox groupings such as the Lubavitch, who hope that by increasing strictness and enthusiasm the breeding to preserve Judaism as something sharply distinct from the surrounding world.

The second has been the more open approach of the Reform and Liberal traditions, which have been happy to work with couples of mixed religions.

This has led to considerable bitterness on both sides. Last year, Rabbi David Goldberg, of the Liberal synagogue in St John's Wood, predicted that Dr Sacks would be the last Chief Rabbi to be accepted as even the nominal spokesman for the whole of British Jewry.



Scientific sting: Dr Joe Riley fixing one of the devices to a bee. Photograph: Newsteam

Mini radar antennae tracks low flying bees

British scientists have invented the world's smallest radar transponder capable of tracking the low-level flight of insects.

The researchers have proved their device - which weighs just 3mg and measures 16mm - works by superheating it to bees as they leave the hive. And they now hope to refine the technology to help scientists fight disease spread by the tsetse fly in Africa.

The fly is a plague pest that attacks humans and cattle with often fatal results. Control in the past has been managed by spraying insecticide over vast areas of land, but the need for increasing environmental

sensitivity means that a better method has to be found. Dr Joe Riley leading the research team at the Natural Resources Institute, radar unit at North Site, Malvern, said: "Hopefully, the research we are doing with the bees will help us develop a similar device to track the tsetse fly. Scientists in Zimbabwe, who have been looking at the insects' habits for the past 20 years, need to know how they fly when they are close to the ground. Ordinary radar is no use because of reflections from trees and shrubs. We've used bees as a flying test-bed."

By investigating the flight pattern and behaviour of the

tsetse fly, scientists say they will then be able to place impregnated fly traps to the best effect.

First, however, the researchers will have to shrink the device by two-thirds so that it can be fitted to the tsetse.

Dr Riley explained how the technology works. "The harmonic generating tag reflects the radar signal at a different frequency which means it can be picked up in spite of the echoes from the ground. The insects are then tracked by a special radar scanner with two dishes - one to send the signal out and one to receive it... It's rather like the security tags you find on clothes in shops."

Sarah is our bride now, say Turks

HUGH POPE
Kahramanmaraş

British officials yesterday failed to persuade 13-year-old Essex schoolgirl Sarah Cook to comply with a High Court order to leave the Turkish family into which she has illegally "married" and to return forthwith to Britain.

Sarah left a meeting with two British consular officers after one hour, defiantly parrying reporters' questions about her plans with a shout of "Mind your own business!" as she walked off between the arms of her new "father-in-law" and his brother.

The child will stay. These two people love each other," said Turkish provincial governor Aslan Yildirim, smiling with triumph after the meeting between the two families and the British officials in his imposing town centre office. "Sarah is our bride now."

Sarah's mother Jackie Cook, lagged one minute behind her daughter, on her own, her face set. She then squashed into the waiting limousine of the Islamic Welfare Party mayor of Kahramanmaraş, who has also adopted Sarah's cause. When Mrs Cook was asked if she would leave her daughter in Turkey she said: "If I go, she goes."

The British Consul, John Fox, and Vice-Consul, Trudie Pak, who had arrived from Ankara, were forced to retire to consider their options. These are limited, especially since the volatile feeling in Kahramanmaraş is overwhelmingly in favour of a union that Turkish public opinion is treating as a story of star-crossed lovers.

A senior official in Turkey's Ministry of Justice said the British High Court order had, as yet, no validity in Turkey. To prove that Sarah was a ward of a British court that wanted her taken back to Britain, he said the British Government would have to open a case in Kahramanmaraş. That procedure could take weeks, if not months.

The other option would be for Mrs Cook to put Sarah in a taxi and drive to the airport, since, in Turkish law, she is still full guardian of her daughter. If Sarah was to refuse, she could then apply to the Kahramanmaraş court to have her will implemented, the official said.

The girl wants to stay, and the mother wants to go back with Sarah to sort out her legal situation. There are huge pressures on both sides," said lawyer Selim Sumen, who is acting for Sarah's "in-laws".

Meanwhile Sarah's 18-year-old "husband", Musa, is still in a grim concrete jail outside town, accused of under-age sex, a charge that most Turks feel is unjust. They note that the wilful Sarah is taller even than her father-in-law and the older generation of Turks sees young teenage brides as normal and desirable.

The sense of injustice being done extends far up into Turkish officialdom. Governor Yildirim suggested to Turkish reporters that they start a "Free Musa" campaign.

The Kahramanmaraş MP, Ali Dogan, arrived to visit Musa in prison to support the couple and to share his belief, based on Sarah's past statements to the *Sun* newspaper, that "Sarah was not very happy in England anyway."

Channel5 fends off Virgin bid

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Britain's fifth television channel remains on track to start next January after the High Court dismissed claims that the operating licence should not have been awarded to Channel 5 Broadcasting.

Virgin Television argued in a judicial review that the Independent Television Commission was guilty of procedural impropriety in its consideration of CSB's bid. Claims centred on whether the ITC had unfairly allowed CSB to increase its programme funding by £100m to £306m four months after the May deadline for bids.

Virgin also argued that the ITC irrationally failed Virgin's application on programme quality grounds - including its level of news staff, high level of repeats and lack of innovation. Many of its arguments were supported by UKTV, which bid £36.26m but also failed on quality, and New Century TV, the consortium led by Rupert Murdoch, which only bid £22m. Virgin and CSB both bid £22.002m.

Lord Justice Henry and Mr Justice Turner said: "We are satisfied that there was neither illegality nor unfairness in the commission recognising CSB's shareholders' commitment."

Virgin, NCTV and UKTV were denied leave to appeal.

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Animal cruelty Bill wins field sports lobby's backing

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

Cruelty to wild animals - except by hunting with dogs - is almost certain to become a criminal offence punishable by jail after a Labour backbencher's Bill was rushed unopposed through all its stages in the Commons yesterday.

After the failure last year of a Bill to outlaw all cruelty to animals, including a ban on hunting, Alan Meale, MP for Mansfield, secured the backing of field sports supporters by dropping anti-hunt clauses from his Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill.

The Bill would make it an offence to "mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate" any wild mammal.

But, unlike the Bill proposed by John McFall (Labour MP for Dumbarton) last year, it "does not seek to outlaw the hunting and killing of wild animals with dogs or the strangulation of animals with wire snares", Mr Meale told MPs. Mr McFall's Bill was scuppered by hunt supporters.

Practices such as hunting foxes with hounds, beagling, snar-

ling and lamping will still be legal. Snaring involves sending ferrets down rabbit holes to chase them out of other holes snared with wire traps. Lamping is hunting foxes at night with torches.

Mr Meale said he had reluctantly made considerable concessions after "intense" talks with pro- and anti-field sports groups. "Many of my friends and the vast majority of the pub-

lic will be disappointed... So am I." But he said that the reality was that a broader Bill would have "little chance at this time to become law - it had to be in the interests of the animal kingdom that I proceeded".

Junior Health minister Tom Sackville gave the measure "very strong support". He said: "It is a sad reflection on our society that such a Bill should be nec-

essary, that there a despicable minority of people who are prepared to commit such acts."

Sir John Cope (Conservative MP for Northavon), a member of the British Field Sports Society, welcomed the Bill, saying that Mr Meale had been "very sensible" to limit its objectives.

Mr McFall also welcomed the Bill, saying: "Only by securing

such legislation can we call ourselves a civilised society."

Kate Parminter, spokeswoman for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, said: "We're delighted and really optimistic about the Bill's chances this time."

Labour is committed to a free vote on the issue, which would probably go against hunting if the party won a reasonable

majority at the next election. But when pressed on animal welfare in an interview in *Country Life* magazine in September, Tony Blair, the Labour leader, said: "We are not about to change people's way of life."

Mr Meale's Bill now goes to the Lords where it is also expected to have a speedy passage and will almost certainly reach the Statute Book.

The Maxwell affair: Lawyers exchange opening volleys as SFO presses ahead with fresh charges over collapse

Confident smiles turn to looks of disbelief

JOHN WILLCOCK
Financial Correspondent

The SFO's decision to press ahead with another five counts on the original indictment against the Maxwell defendants, despite their acquittal last week on two of the counts, hit the Old Bailey court room like a bombshell.

Most learned legal opinion had expected the remaining counts against Kevin and Ian Maxwell and three former Maxwell employees to be dropped. Yesterday morning's hearing at Chichester Rents, the Old Bailey's annexe in Chancery Lane, London, was seen as a formality.

The body language of the five defendants and their attendant counsel and solicitors contrasted completely with that during the trial. Where Kevin had previously been pale and drawn, pacing the room, yesterday morning found him smiling and chatting.

There was even something of a swagger about the defendants' retinue as they regarded the five-strong SFO prosecution team sitting a few feet from them. At 10.30am, the trial Judge, Lord Justice Phillips, started the proceedings and the SFO's counsel, Richard Lissack, rose to speak.

It started innocuously. Mr Lissack explained why the SFO was dropping charges against Robert Bunn, due to ill health. Mr Bunn was originally a defendant in the first trial who had to drop out following a heart attack.

Mr Lissack added that Ian Maxwell, Kevin's elder brother, was also clear of all charges as he had "never been involved to the same degree" as alleged of the others.

Then it came: "On counts one, two and nine, we intend to prosecute Kevin Maxwell, Larry Trachtenberg and Albert Fuller..." The end of the sentence was lost as the journalists stamped out of the court to alert their offices.

Gone were the smiles. There followed a series of heated exchanges between Mr Lissack and Kevin's counsel, Alun Jones QC. Mr Jones said that the SFO said last week it would inform the defence of its decision in advance, yet he had heard nothing until receiving "anecdotal" information, minutes before the hearing, which turned out to be wrong.

Mr Lissack countered: "I tried to speak to him and he wouldn't speak to me."

Mr Jones then complained of being "caught on the hop". He said a second trial would be



Body language: Kevin Maxwell (left) and his brother, Ian, leaving the Old Bailey after the hearing yesterday

Photograph: Edward Webb

even longer than the first and would be "oppressive", "an abuse of process" and "nothing less than an outrage".

Michael Hill QC, Mr Trachtenberg's counsel, said that although he had been able to find out the SFO's intentions before the hearing, the solicitors for Mr

Fuller had not been told of the decision. "That discourtesy is a measure of how prosecution is being conducted," said Mr Hill.

Mr Lissack responded: "May I make it plain. I do not propose to rise to language like outrage, oppressive, deplorable..." He insisted that final deci-

sions were only reached that morning because so many people's views had to be taken into consideration and all aspects of the case considered "in the minutest detail".

All those concerned had spent the past seven days considering the many factors and

how they affected each charge and each defendant, and how the public interest could best be served, he said. Keith Oliver, Kevin's solicitor, shook his head in disbelief.

Mr Lissack concluded that a new judge would not take long to read up for the second trial,

which could start in October. The existing judge, Lord Justice Phillips, one of the few in court to maintain his sang froid throughout the 70-minute hearing, agreed to Kevin having several weeks' holiday before a hearing to decide on the abuse of process claim.

Drug tests for road victims

JOHN ARLIDGE
Scotland Correspondent

People killed in road accidents are to be tested for drug abuse in a three-year Department of Transport survey designed to gauge the extent of Britain's growing "drug-driving" problem. Transport officials confirmed yesterday that tests will begin later this year.

The move comes after Scotland's largest police force uncovered evidence of an increase in drug-driving. In a study, Strathclyde police found that more than one in five people who died in road accidents last year had taken illegal drugs. Senior officers are now calling on the Government to introduce legislation to enable police to conduct roadside drug tests.

Toxicologists in Glasgow examined the bodies of 52 crash victims and found that 11 had consumed dangerous levels of illegal drugs. Superintendent Alistair McLuckie, who co-ordinated the Strathclyde study, which is the first of its kind by a British police force, yesterday called on ministers to change the law to enable officers to take roadside saliva or urine samples for analysis. Although it is illegal to drive under the influence of any powerful drugs, police cannot use existing legislation to force motorists to take instant tests which could lead to arrest. There are no government-approved "drugs breathalysers".

A Department of Transport spokesman said the three-year survey of crash victims, which has been planned for several months, would begin in April.

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Carol & Dorothy

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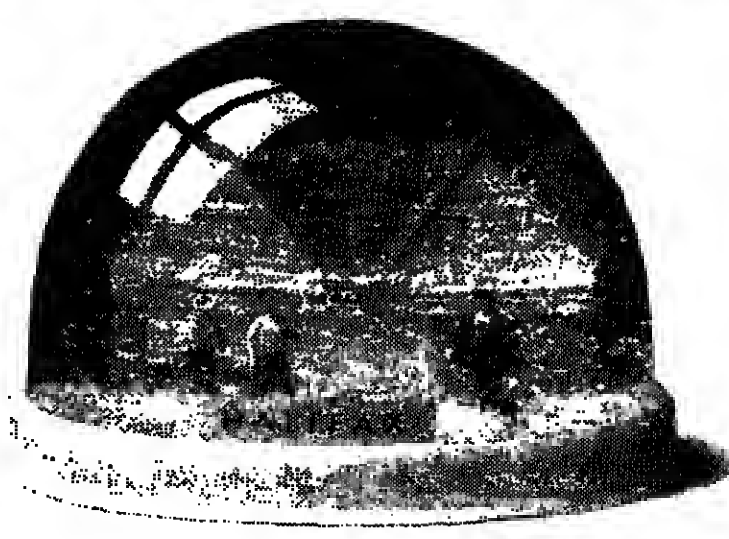
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I thought I meant a lot more to
him than that. How could he be so cheap?

Anyway, the wedding and honeymoon
have now been cancelled. I thought you should
know.

Yours disappointedly
Michelle Brown

P.S. I'm keeping the Polo.



RECEIVED

news

Court sinks Gummer's river bid

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

The Government's attempt to redraw the boundaries of two of Britain's biggest estuaries in order to save £100m in sewage clean-up costs was quashed by a High Court judge yesterday.

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, had decided to move the line where the Humber and Severn estuaries become sea dozens of miles inland for the purposes of a European Union sewage directive.

His move would have enabled Britain to escape its legal obligation to install an expensive level of treatment for the sewage of some one million people which is piped into these estuaries.

But local councils obtained a judicial review of Mr Gummer's decision, and yesterday Mr Justice Harrison pronounced that he was quite wrong to set new boundaries purely on the basis of cost considerations.

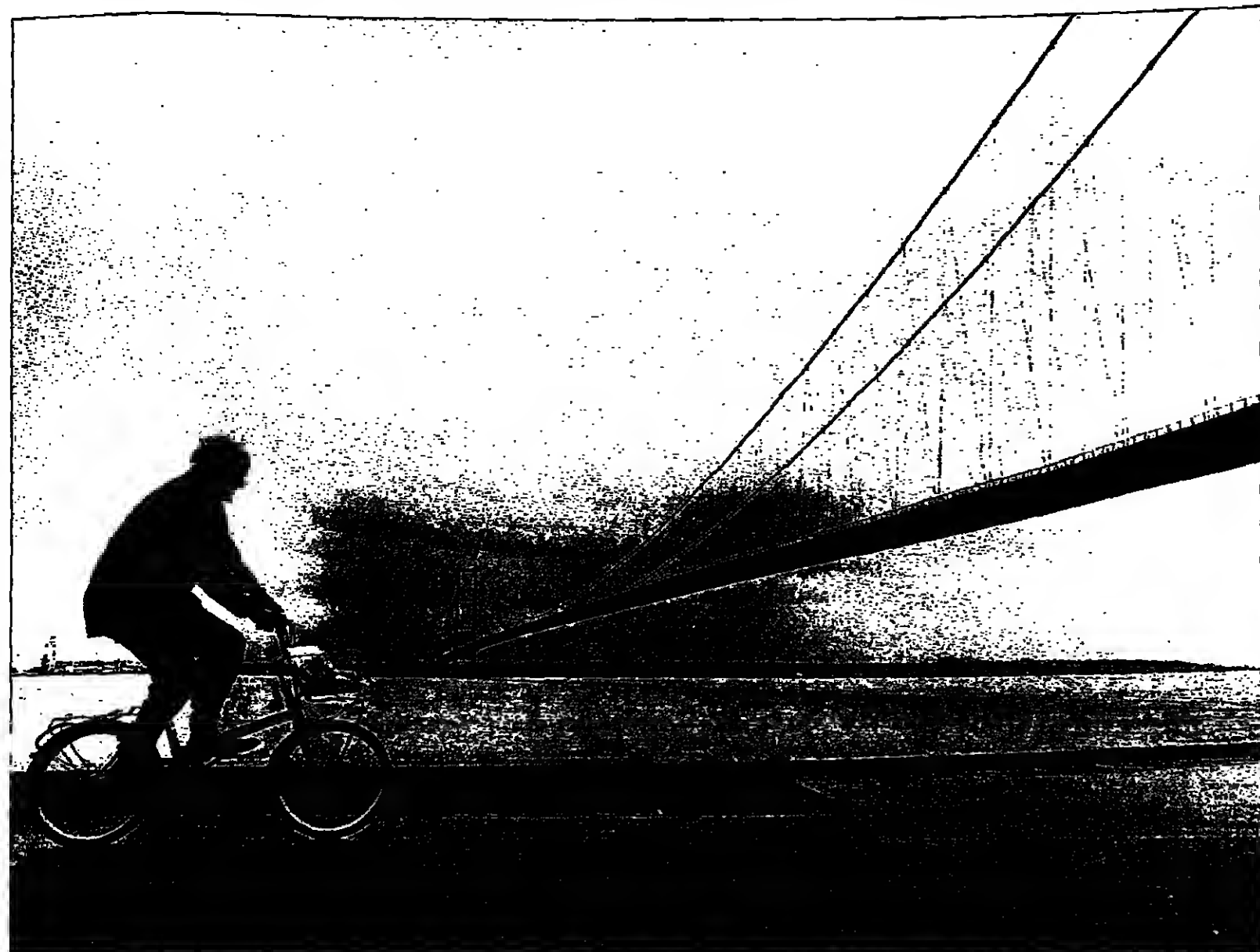
As a result of the judgment two water companies, Wessex and troubled Yorkshire, will have to spend about £100m by 2000 installing secondary treatment on their estuary sewage works, in which bacteria digest most of the sewage.

The two had planned to install only primary treatment in which the heavier, solid material is allowed to settle out and the remaining contaminated liquid pumped into the estuary.

Most of the extra cost is likely to be passed on to their customers. Ofwat, the water industry's economic regulator, said the ruling could add up to £5 a year to about three million household bills. But the city councils of Bristol and Hull were delighted by the judgment, believing it will improve the environment and the public image of their estuaries.

The EU's Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive mandates every member state to carry out secondary treatment of all sewage discharges into estuaries. But for "coastal waters", only primary treatment is needed if a government can show these are high natural dispersion areas where currents and tides rapidly dilute the effluent.

The court was told that the National Rivers Authority, the Government's water pollution watchdog, had originally suggested that the estuary boundaries should have been based on



Pipe line: A plan to make the Humber Bridge the river estuary's boundary to avoid sewage costs has been quashed

Photograph: Brian Duff

natural landmarks, salinity and a defunct 1960 Act.

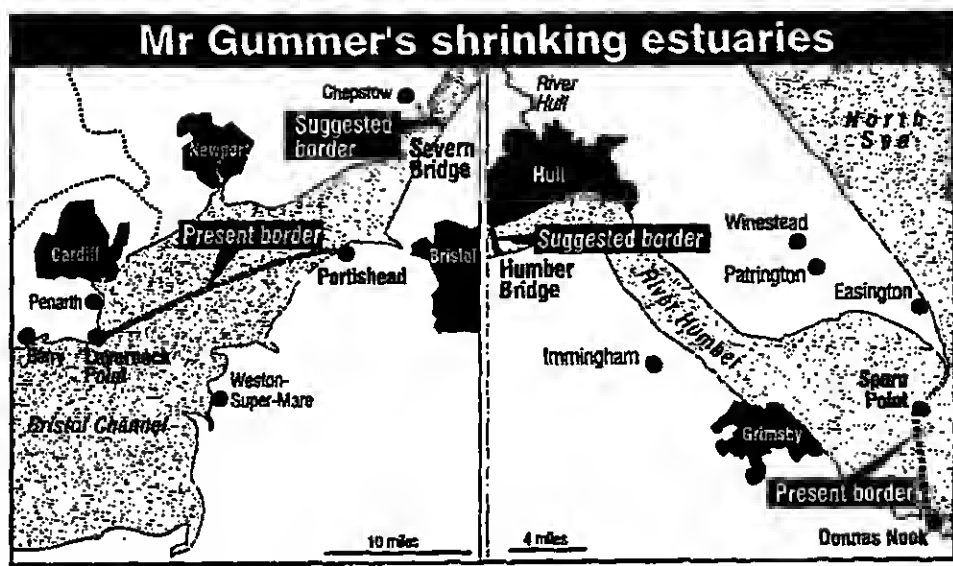
But the Government, worried about the directive's implications for water bills, asked the authority to think again. The NRA then agreed to bringing the seaward boundaries inland to the Severn and Humber suspension bridges. As a result several big estuarine sewage works were left in coastal waters. The final cost saving step was to define these waters as high natural dispersion areas.

The NRA has advised the Government, on request, that it does not believe secondary treatment would bring significant gains in water cleanliness, and the extra money might be better spent on other sewage clean-up programmes.

Nigel Pleming QC, for the Department of the Environment, told the court investment in secondary treatment would be "a complete waste of £100m".

But the judge said: "It would be quite wrong to redraw the boundaries... in order to escape the clear requirement of the directive. The cost of providing secondary rather than primary treatment is simply not relevant." He refused the department leave to appeal but Mr Gummer may decide to ask the Court of Appeal for the right of appeal against the judgment.

Jackie Hawken, a solicitor for Bristol City Council, said: "We're absolutely delighted. People are very concerned about the environment in the estuary."



Police chiefs 'ignore claims of brutality'

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Senior police officers were yesterday accused of failing to deal with claims of police brutality and gross misconduct, which are costing the taxpayer millions in damages and costs.

The allegations came in the wake of Thursday's inquest jury verdict that Scotland Yard officers had "unlawfully killed" Shaji Lajpe during an arrest and - in a separate court - the payment of more than £90,000 in damages and costs to three people who sued for assault, wrongful imprisonment and malicious prosecution.

Thursday saw the second "unlawful killing" verdict against Metropolitan Police officers in two months. In November, a coroner's jury brought in a similar decision in the case of Richard O'Brien, who died after telling police arresting him: "I can't breathe."

In both cases, the verdict appeared to fly in the face of earlier decisions by the Crown Prosecution Service that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute any officers involved in either incident. Now the CPS has been forced to reconsider its decisions.

There have been remarkably few prosecutions to have resulted from cases involving allegations of brutality, perhaps even more surprisingly, there have been equally few disciplinary actions.

In the case of Oliver Pryce, a 30-year-old man who, like Mr Lajpe, died as the result of a police neck hold, there was both an "unlawful killing verdict" and, in a civil action for damages, an admission by Cleveland police of liability. But no officers were ever charged or disciplined.

In London alone in 1994, police paid out nearly £1.4m in damages and even more in lawyers' bills, winning outright only 24 out of 304 cases. In 1993, they paid out nearly £1.1m, plus costs, winning outright only 16 of 243 cases. Over those two years - the latest for which figures are available, £1.5m was paid out to settle 48 serious claims - including one for

more than £500,000 for assault and false imprisonment.

But although dozens of police were involved in these, none were prosecuted and only four disciplined. One officer was cautioned, another fined and two "given words of advice".

Yesterday lawyers and MPs suggested the lack of any apparent action against officers, suggested "an absence of will" on the part of senior officers, including Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, to tackle the problem.

Scotland Yard declined an invitation to discuss the matter in depth, but has in the past maintained a reluctance to pursue disciplinary action because people chose to sue, rather than go through the formal complaints procedure. Their argument is: "If there is no complaint, how can there be any action?"

But Raju Bhatt, a leading London solicitor, said: "What more do they need in the form of a complaint than a detailed statement of claim and witness statements in support?"

He said that when there had been adverse findings by judges and juries, there should be even more compulsion on senior officers to investigate. "Instead, what is happening is that officers are being led to believe that their activities are acceptable because they can get away with it. If there was a suspicion that you or I, as a member of the public, had been involved in a serious attack, we would be arrested, held in custody, probably charged, and brought to court within the year."

But Sir Paul is on the record as saying that solicitors and complainants saw the police as a "soft option" to sue and that he was determined to settle less and fight more actions in court.

Yesterday, Chris Mullin, the Labour MP and veteran justice campaigner said: "The Metropolitan police are paying millions each year in damages and lawyers' fees, yet the Commissioner is flatly refusing to take any action against officers whose misbehaviour is responsible for this cost to the taxpayer. The longer this goes on, the more that public confidence will be undermined."

Man admits thefts of rare book plates

A landscape gardener cut hundreds of pictures from libraries' rare antique books worth up to £289,000, a court was told yesterday.

Joseph Bellwood, who has been banned from going into any library until his case has been dealt with, sold or swapped them making up to £37,000.

Southwark Crown Court in south London was told by Martin Hicks, for the prosecution, Bellwood, 43, of Swillington, West Yorkshire, has admitted 12 sample charges of theft and damaging property between January 1994 and June 1995.

Mr Hicks told Judge Mota Singh that the value of the

books involved had been estimated at £189,000-£289,000. He said 1,149 plates, illustrations and prints had been stolen, mostly from the British Library, the London Library, Leeds Central Library and Birmingham Central Library, of which 439 had been recovered or traced.

Justin Shalc, for the defence,

said the value of the books involved and the amount his client was said to have made were disputed. He said the volumes were worth £100,000 and Mr Bellwood's benefit £16,000. He asked for an eight-week adjournment so these matters could be dealt with. The judge agreed to continue bail.

Ecstasy smuggler jailed for six years

A drug smuggler who brought ecstasy and "speed" valued at £5.6m into Britain was jailed for six years yesterday.

John Moore, 23, of St Helens, Merseyside, was said by his lawyer to be "somewhat immature" and had been sucked into the crime by others.

Judge Keith Simpson told him at Maidstone Crown Court: "I have no doubt whatsoever you were a very minor cog and insignificant figure in the hierarchy of drug trafficking. I can't imagine that anyone in their right mind would entrust you with £5.5m worth of drugs."

The court was told that Moore smuggled 400,000 ecstasy tablets worth £5m, and 3.64kg of 90 per cent pure amphetamine sulphate, with coach firm boss Trevor Haskayne, Haskayne, 36, of Meols, Wirral, was convicted in December of drug smuggling and jailed for 18 years.

David Fisher, for the prosecution, said Haskayne, boss of Montravel in West Kirby, Wirral, used a weekend shopping trip to the Netherlands by coach as a cover.

Moore, who admitted the charge, and his wife, 20, flew from Manchester to Amsterdam on 3 December 1994. They stayed with Haskayne's party at the Lancaster Hotel.

Passengers saw Moore walk to the coach carrying three large holdalls. During the journey to Calais, another passenger saw Haskayne give Moore £80.

Haskayne put a sign on the coach saying "Dunkirk Shopper, Coach 2", even though there was only one, to enable them to pass through Customs quickly. But the bus was searched and a sniffer dog found the drugs.

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'Cats' without pause sets a record for long-playing musicals



Super trouper: Steven Wayne, the only remaining member of the original *Cats* cast, prepares for another performance Photograph: Edward Sykes

JOHN MCKIE

Andrew Lloyd Webber's award-winning musical *Cats*, which holds the accolade of London's longest-running musical, is set to enter the record books again on Monday when it becomes the longest-running musical of all time.

The show, which has grossed more than £100 worldwide in ticket sales and merchandise, will beat the previous record of 6,137 performances held by the Broadway production of *A Chorus Line*.

Cats opened at the New London Theatre in Covent Garden on 11 May 1981 and has played to full houses since, earning £85m in London alone.

The musical, based on TS Eliot's *Cat in Hat's Shoe* of *Practical Cats*, received mixed reviews when it opened but, with its revolving stage, was praised for pioneering new theatrical production values. Sue Uings, who was box office manager when *Cats* first opened and is now head of marketing for the theatrical impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh, sees the technology as a key factor in the musical's success. "It was the



Super cats: Feline friends from the award-winning show

fore-runner of all the hi-tech musicals," she said.

Steven Wayne, the only member from the 1981 original cast still in the show, has not tired of hearing the *Cats* theme "Memory", "because everyone sings it differently. The only time it annoys me is when I am on holiday and I hear it piped in a hotel or on a plane."

However, the musical still has some way to go before it breaks the 44-year record of *The Mousetrap*, which is Britain's longest-running stage show.

Making memories

- *Cats* has been seen by 7 million people in London alone.
- There are nine current productions playing around the world.
- In 1985, it became London's longest-running musical.
- Dame Judi Dench was due to play Grizabella but had to pull out just before the show because of an injured ankle. She was replaced by Elaine Paige, who sang the worldwide hit "Memory".
- There have been more than 100 recorded versions of "Memory". Sheet music sales of the song in the UK total 95,500.

Building firms hit by 'cowboys'

GLENDIA COOPER

"Cowboy" builders are flourishing while reputable firms go under because home owners and the Government allow them to, according to a new report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The fear of poor quality work also deters many people from doing necessary work, imperilling the house's safety. A study for National Housing Week in 1994 estimated that £690 needed to be spent to bring the UK housing stock up to the standard.

The report, *Quality Repairs: Improving the efficiency of the housing repair and maintenance industry*, studied 80 small builders in Bristol and north Somerset and found that only half those working even in reputable firms had a formal construction industry qualification or formal business training and few employed trainees.

The report noted that a "generally minimalist" attitude to business administration was common, and new technology was rare, even for such simple tasks as word processing.

But while many reputable builders struggle on, home owners compound the problem because of their willingness to employ contractors who cut

corners and avoid VAT by accepting cash payments.

One contractor complained: "There's less work and materials have gone up but customers want cheaper prices. At times it's hardly worth working. Five years ago, I had 16 people working for me. Now I only have two and I have just a few weeks work ahead."

Cowboy builders were described as traders who put in very cheap quotes based on the cost of poor-quality materials and inexperienced workers. Work was usually of poor quality and might not comply with building standards or regulations. They were less likely to use safety procedures and unlikely to possess public liability insurance.

Another contractor reported: "Often I hear that the client has found someone who will do the work at half my estimate. To do that they must be working on the quiet. They're not qualified and they're probably claiming unemployment benefit."

But taking the cheap option can often work out more expensive. "Customers are misled. The trouble is they are not experienced enough to know what they are getting and they may not realise how bad the job is until it is too late. I often get called to sort out bodged jobs."

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Labour to adopt 'stakeholder' pension reform

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Labour is poised to back funded second pensions as a replacement for the State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme (Serps). The move would provide growing numbers of workers, including the lower paid, who rely heavily on Serps, with their own stake in investment funds for their retirement.

The change reflects an increasing consensus, both in the pensions industry and, to a degree, politically, that second-tier pensions in future should be funded from savings, not from pay-as-you-go national insurance contributions.

But it will mark a sharp shift in Labour policy, which for twenty years has backed the retention and reconstruction of Serps, introduced by Barbara Castle in 1975 with cross-party agreement.

Chris Smith, Labour's social security spokesman, said yesterday that no final decisions

had been taken. But in an interview with the Independent, he said: "There must be serious questions about the long-term sustainability of pay-as-you-go models for second tier pensions" - where today's taxation or contributions pays for today's pensions and the money is not invested.

Since 1988, the Government has cut the final value of Serps by three-quarters, in part because of fears that with rising numbers of elderly up to the year 2030, future taxpayers would not pay the additional £50bn a year the full Serps pensions would have cost.

"Any pay-as-you-go scheme is open to the predatory attacks of governments less sympathetic to the needs of a future generation," Mr Smith said. Funded second pensions with defined contributions producing a decent rate of return looked "ultimately a better approach".

Decisions would still be needed on whether to continue Serps for the present generation of members, to run a funded second tier for them alongside as an alternative, or to "try to transfer everyone into a new scheme with the absolute guarantee that they will be no worse off than if Serps continued".

Indicating that he would favour the latter if the transfer costs were acceptable, Mr Smith said the alternative to Serps need not be a single, National Pensions Scheme, privately run at arms-length from Government, as advocated by this week's Retirement Income Inquiry. A better solution could be a range of competing funds where "the Government sets the parameters and the private sector is involved in the development of the product".

In Australia, from where Mr Smith had just returned, intense competition within the private sector to run Government-defined industry-wide pension schemes had produced "remarkably low" running costs of one to two per cent, he said - a lesson Britain could learn.

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Eye of the storm: Richard Branson and his co-pilots at a press shoot in Morocco yesterday as rain blighted their plans Photograph: John Voos

Branson hogs hot air of publicity

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

Many of the sponsors of Richard Branson's project to fly a helium-filled balloon non-stop around the world have found themselves edged out of the media spotlight - to their growing annoyance.

While Mr Branson has courted attention from newspapers, radio and television on behalf of the three Virgin companies co-sponsoring the project - which has an estimated cost of £2.5m - the other 91 sponsors involved with it have struggled to win any attention at all.

Bad weather has delayed the balloon's take-off by more than a week from its planned start, and it will probably not take off from Marrakesh, in southern Morocco, until next week.

A number of sponsors are privately fuming at the manner in which Virgin has taken the

lion's share of the publicity, while spending comparatively little.

Almost all the equipment for the project - including the high-technology balloon material and propane fuel to power the engines needed to keep the three-man crew alive while aloft - has been donated by outside companies.

Many people have worked for free to assemble and test the balloon, though their hotel costs are being covered by Virgin. The team, numbering almost 50 people, has now been at the site near Marrakesh for almost two weeks while the weather - particularly the pattern of winds - has made a take-off impossible.

The balloon material consists of 16,000sq ft of high-strength, aluminium-coated plastic worth at least £15,000, provided by HIFI Industrial Film, based in Stevenage. The company, with

annual revenues of just £7.5m, had hoped to benefit from publicity. Instead, it has found its name almost submerged, while the balloon now bears Virgin's name in large letters. "We have had to fight for everything," said Andrew Mallard, who represented the firm in Morocco.

The 4.5 tons of specially processed liquid propane fuel that will power the engines was provided free by Mobil. Just over a fortnight ago, Mobil received an urgent request to deliver the fuel to Marrakesh - three days ahead of schedule. But on arriving two weeks ago, the drivers, paid by Mobil, were told that the balloon would not be lifting off for at least five days.

But David Partridge, a Virgin director who is the project's manager, says this was because Mr Branson was very keen not to be beaten in the attempt to make the first non-stop cir-

cumnavigation. That was threatened earlier this year by the launch of a balloon piloted by an American, Steve Follert.

"Our original plan for when we wanted the propane and helium went out the window when Steve Follert took off. Richard wanted everything done right away. We didn't want any hold-up caused by the balloon being ready but the helium or propane not being there."

"Richard, in his zest to be first and not beaten, applied pressure on me and everybody in the team to make it work."

However, the delays caused by the weather have meant that the extra effort has gone to waste, and left observers wondering what the rush was about.

If the unfavourable weather continues into February, the attempt may have to be abandoned until November, when air conditions at 30,000ft will once again be suitable to try a flight.

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Bad news from Bonn heightens EMU fears

SARAH HELM
Brussels
PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

Predictions that European Monetary Union may have to be delayed were reinforced yesterday by new figures suggesting that even Germany may fail to meet the conditions for the 1999 launch date.

On Thursday British ministers suggested that the collapse of monetary union plans was imminent and that France and Germany may be forced to change course within weeks.

The remarks were fiercely rejected yesterday by the European Commission and treated with suspicion in many European capitals, where the comments were widely seen as an attempt to undermine the entire venture.

However, serious doubts about the feasibility of merging major European currencies on the terms set out in the Maastricht treaty remained widespread. Speaking at a conference in Germany yesterday, Philippe Séguin, the Gaullist head of the French National Assembly, described the present EMU timetable as "risky and questionable".

Germany's latest economic predictions added to the gloom. Bonn announced that it expects its public spending deficit for 1996 to be about 3.5 per cent of economic output, exceeding the Maastricht rules for joining EMU by 0.5 of a point. Countries wishing to join monetary union in 1999 must have achieved the 3 per cent deficit limit by the end of 1997. Earlier this month, Theo Waigel, the German finance minister, predicted that Germany's budget deficit would be brought down in time to the 3 per cent level. His predictions now seem highly optimistic.

A report by the economics ministry said that the German economy would grow by only 1.5 per cent this year. Unemployment would rise by 250,000 to average 10 per cent of the workforce - up from 9.4 per cent in 1995.

But officials in Bonn made it clear last night that the government is determined to stand firm on the EMU timetable, in the belief that any weakening would remove budgetary discipline from Germany and other EU countries and make the economic situation worse.

The European Commission continued to reject predictions of imminent collapse. Officials accused British ministers of capitalising on the wave of nervousness in Europe for domestic political purposes; the Government negotiated an opt-out from the single currency at the Maastricht summit in 1991, and Tory Eurosceptics have demanded a commitment to keep sterling independent but the Prime Minister has refused to make a decision until next year.

"Nothing that has happened this week suggests any real sapping of political will in France or Germany," said one senior official. Commission economists argue that the economic news is not yet so desperate that the EMU timetable, or rigid budgetary discipline, must be abandoned. This would only happen if a recession looked inevitable "and there are no signs of that," they insist. Other economists are not so confident.

Speaking in Paris, Yves Thihaut de Silguy, the EU Economic Commissioner, repeated earlier Commission predictions that between eight and 10 countries should be able to meet the Maastricht criteria for monetary union by the end of 1997. He said that a delay in the launch would mean a renegotiation of the Maastricht treaty.

Military might on display for India's Republic Day



Turban power: Sikh troops in the parade in New Delhi yesterday to mark the anniversary of India becoming a republic in 1950. India's newest missiles and tanks were also displayed. Photograph: Ajit Kumar/AP

Polish leader wants secret files opened

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Central Europe Correspondent

Poland's President, Aleksander Kwasniewski, is to push for the country's Communist-era secret police files to be opened. The move follows the resignation of the Prime Minister, Jozef Oleksy, over claims that he was a KGB spy.

Mr Kwasniewski, a former Communist, wants the files to be made accessible to an independent commission that would then be able to rule whether candidates for senior government posts had been informers.

The aim of the legislation, which would be modelled on that passed for east Germany, would be to draw a line under the Communist past and establish ground rules on the extent to which politicians can be judged today for what they did in the past. "I would like to help Poles... settle accounts from the more distant and the recent past," said Mr Kwasniewski, who, like most ex-Communists, previously opposed any opening of the secret-police files. His change of heart was undoubtedly prompted by the fate of Mr Oleksy, his party colleague, who spent the past month trying to defend himself against allegations that he was a Moscow spy for more than a decade.

Even as he announced his resignation on Wednesday, Mr Oleksy insisted he was innocent but acknowledged he had been friendly for many years with a Russian diplomat who worked for the KGB. That the Prime Minister was forced to quit before having been found formally guilty undermined the continuing potency of the past, and the extent to which nearly all senior east European politicians still live under its shadow.

The only former Warsaw Pact country that fully opened its files is the old East Germany, where anyone who worked for the secret police has been barred from public office and where everybody has been entitled to see their own files. Although the decision to open the files was controversial, it has been considered a success, ensuring that allegations are based on fact rather than rumour and allow-

ing ordinary east Germans to find out at last who it was who was spying on them for all those years.

Mr Kwasniewski is involved in talks with party leaders aimed at agreeing a successor to Mr Oleksy. In the legislation he intends to present to parliament, he will propose a commission to oversee the files, now in the charge of the interior ministry. The commission is to have access to all pre-1989 files and, in special cases, more recent ones.

The President's former Communist party colleagues in the governing Democratic Left Alliance are likely to support the move. As part of their attempt to show themselves to be genuinely reformed social



Kwasniewski: Drawing a line under Communism

democrats, they want to be seen to be open and honest about their backgrounds.

Ironically, resistance to the new law is likely to come from the centre and right opposition parties, which feel the initiative is a smokescreen to deflect attention from the Oleksy affair.

Some analysts say the opening of the files could reveal more collaborators from the ranks of the old Solidarity movement than among the former Communists themselves.

But then, as the east Germans discovered, much of the information in the files was fabricated by agents over-anxious to please their bosses. And the files of many of the old Communists who really worked as informers mysteriously disappeared just before the final collapse of Communism in 1989.

IN BRIEF

Students jailed after secret trial

Cairo — Twenty-four Libyan students were tortured and convicted in a secret trial on charges of taking part in anti-government riots, Amnesty International said. They are believed to be serving terms of up to nine years, and are not being allowed access to their families or lawyers. AP

No apology

Oslo — Israel agreed to pay compensation to the wife and daughter of Ahmed Bouchikhi, an innocent Moroccan waiter killed during a bungled 1973 Mossad assassination in Norway, but stopped short of apologising, according to lawyers for the family. AP

Internet Nazis

Bonn — Deutsche Telekom, Germany's biggest Internet provider, cut off access to neo-Nazi material posted on the global network by Ernst Zündel, a German right-wing extremist living in Canada, a day after prosecutors said they were considering incitement charges against the telephone company and another firm. AP

'Anti-white' Mandela

Johannesburg — South Africa's neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement accused President Nelson Mandela of being "anti-white" for agreeing to meet the black American Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, who arrives for a visit today. Reuters

All wrong

Houston, Texas — A pregnant runaway girl who touched off an international search because she was thought to be ten has turned out to be 14. She was also not as far along in her pregnancy as had been reported, or going by her correct name. Reuters

Picture rail

Bordeaux — Teachers in Bordeaux, where the French Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, is mayor, protested that his portrait had been hung in several schools and nurseries. Reuters

Kiss of freedom

Dedham, Massachusetts — Christopher Glover, 20, escaped from jail after his girlfriend, Shannon Rideout, managed to pass him a key to his handcuffs during a passionate kiss. He was recaptured, and both face charges. AP

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Remember me, but let me go – that's it'

Death Row: Utah execution goes 'like clockwork'

DAVID USBORNE
Draper, Utah

It had been denounced worldwide as inhumane and barbaric. And so, maybe, it was. But the execution by firing squad of John Albert Taylor, convicted child killer, was swift and surprisingly clinical. It was not a messy death – as with Gary Gilmore 19 years ago – but precision-perfect. It passed, in fact, exactly

as both the victim and executioners had wanted.

When their triggers were pulled at 12.04am, the five .30 hunting rifles delivered one clean report – an abrupt "boom", said one of the witnesses. Strapped into the specially designed execution chair just 20ft away, Taylor probably never heard the explosion. The bullets that entered his heart would have travelled faster than

the speed of sound. Within three minutes, he was pronounced dead.

It was what remained afterwards that best described an execution that had been so painstakingly orchestrated. In the plywood that had been behind the convict, the bullets had made just a single hole, about a third of an inch deep and so narrow that a dime would have covered it.

Thus, Utah, which in 2002 will be host to the Winter Olympics, was a state experiencing relief yesterday. For many among its majority Mormon population who still believe in the teachings of their church's earliest leaders, the required "blood atonement" had been duly achieved. But while blood had been spilled – a slowly spreading patch of dampness on Taylor's dark prison jumpsuit where a small white target had been placed, indicating his heart – there had been no gushing and no gore. "It was like clockwork," the prison warden, Hank Galetka, declared. "It went as rehearsed."

When Gilmore was shot for the killing of a motel clerk, he was strapped to a simple office chair. Whisky had been smuggled in to the chamber, and money changed hands as reporters bought the accounts of witnesses. And there was no metal pan under the chair to catch his blood. But Taylor's



Killer: John Albert Taylor shackled in his cell

passing was like Gilmore's in one respect. He never once wavered from his determination to go through with it. Even at the last moment, he could have asked to resume his appeals process. But he did not. And it was he who, one month earlier,

had opted for death by firing squad rather than by lethal injection.

Beverly DeVoy, a freelance journalist who was one of Taylor's three invited witnesses, said health problems – an enlarged heart, bleeding ulcers and



Victim: Charla King, seven, 1984 Photographs: AP

swollen legs and feet – bound him to his death wish. He did not want to die alone in his cell, she said.

Taylor's mood in his final hours in a "death watch" cell adjacent to the execution chamber was depicted in pithy

progress reports typed out hourly from mid-afternoon and distributed to the media.

For example: 22.00 – Inmate Taylor seems to be in good spirits. Visiting with his attorneys. 22.10 – Constant conversation, sprinkled with frequent laugh-

ter. Only occasionally were their hints of anguish. 22.48 – Taylor is crying, sitting very still with his head bowed.

Even in his death chair, when given the opportunity to make a last statement, Taylor was sanguine. "I would just like to say to my family, my friends, as the poem was written: 'Remember me, but let me go.' In a whisper, he added: 'That's it'.

The warden then retreated to the back of the chamber, counted out loud to three and ordered, "Fire!"

Taylor never confessed to the murder for which he was executed. In an interview last Monday with two high-school reporters, he said again that he had not murdered Charla King, 11. The girl was discovered dead on her bed by her mother, Sheron King, on 23 June 1989 – naked, a telephone cord around her neck and her underwear stuffed in her mouth. Of Mrs King, Taylor said: "There's really not much I can say to her. I'm sorry for her loss... I didn't do it."

Is Taylor's destined to be the last execution by the bullet in America? Perhaps. But recent attempts to introduce legislation to end the practice have stirred little support amongst state politicians. Nor was there much sign of sympathy for Taylor among the citizenry as he perished on Thursday night. How many were there in the congregation at a nighttime vigil in St Ann's Episcopal church in central Salt Lake City, for example? Only five.

Prison log of Taylor's last night

- 19.44 Taylor asked if he could have his antacid liquid. Warden Galetka stated he would take care of this.
- 19.46 Inmate Taylor received his antacid.
- 20.01 Deputy Warden offers Inmate Taylor more soda, pizza, coffee. Taylor declines.
- 20.15 Chaplin Rodriguez and John Taylor are discussing prayers and the "After Life".
- 21.41 Taylor's mood appears positive.
- 21.56 Inmate Taylor still talking to his attorneys. Seems to be in good spirits and adamant to proceed.
- 22.10 Constant conversation, sprinkled with frequent laughter. Taylor seems relaxed and almost happy.
- 22.45 Inmate Taylor is visiting attorneys Rogers and Brass and Father Rodriguez. They are singing hymns at this time.
- 22.48 Father Rodriguez reading scriptures. Taylor is crying, sitting very still with head bowed.
- 23.35 Warden Galetka asks Taylor if he wants to wear his glasses for the execution. Taylor says, "There is no need for them."
- 23.50 Taylor taken out of death watch area. Area secured.

Hillary Clinton takes oath over Whitewater

JOHN CARLIN
Washington

Hillary Clinton was testifying under oath yesterday before a grand jury seeking to establish whether she is deceitful or just plain disorganised. If the 23 members of the grand jury, who conduct their work in total secrecy, find sufficient evidence that the wife of the President of the United States lied, she could be indicted for conspiracy to obstruct justice.

In the absence, however, of any clarity as to what exactly it is Mrs Clinton might be covering up, it appears more likely that the impact of the hearing will be more political than criminal, providing ammunition in this election year to those who question President Bill Clinton's judgement and integrity.

Mrs Clinton's undignified ordeal yesterday, one never before endured by a First Lady, revolves around a pile of legal documents sought for two years by investigators into the complex Whitewater investment affair.

The papers eventually turned up in the private quarters of the White House.

The 116 pages contain the records of work done by Mrs

Clinton 10 years ago as a partner in the Rose law firm in Arkansas on behalf of Madison Guaranty, a savings bank that went bankrupt and which was owned by the Clintons' partner in the ill-fated Whitewater property venture.

Before a White House aide stumbled upon the documents, which were simply lying on a table in the First Family's book room, three weeks ago, Mrs Clinton had maintained that her work for Madison Guaranty had been "minimal". The records indicate that over 15 months she did 60 hours of work for Madison. Debate continues over whether that was "minimal" involvement or not.

Mrs Clinton said in a newspaper interview published yesterday that it would be "a relief" to answer prosecutors' questions. "This is not a first that I'm particularly pleased about," she said, "but I think that it's a necessary part of the investigation, and I intend to co-operate."

Speaking of what she called her "limited" work for Madison Guaranty, she said that had she foreseen 10 years ago that people "would try to distort it to undermine my reputation and my law practice, of course I would not have done it."

Yeltsin reshuffle ends with pledge to stand by reforms

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Boris Yeltsin yesterday declared that his government reshuffle was more or less complete, after a turbulent few weeks in which he has lurches towards the headline camp and given his supporters at home and abroad a nasty dose of the jitters.

The President also reiterated his commitment to reforms – a move clearly intended to soothe the international concern about the purge of top liberals from his administration and his attempt to use force to crush Chechen rebels in Dagestan. And he was jubilant about Russia's acceptance on Thursday into the Council of Europe.

However, with only five months to go before a presidential election, he seems to be shifting his definition of reform in the hope of winning over the millions of impoverished Russians who, denied the fruits of the emerging free market, have turned to the Communists and ultra-nationalists.

The Boris Yeltsin of 1996 no longer talks of anti-inflationary policies, but waxes lyrical about spending on social issues. Take the last few days: he has agreed to pay more than \$4.5bn (£2.9bn) to Chechnya; ordered an increase in pensions and student grants, and declared that a "President's social fund"

would be set up to cover government workers' salaries if their wages were delayed.

Yesterday – despite reports that Russia's new strategy could jeopardise a \$9bn loan from the International Monetary Fund – there was more of the same: "The most important task is... protection of the social and economic rights of the people," Mr Yeltsin told a meeting of regional officials.

Meanwhile, the President defended his government purge by saying that it was "dictated by conditions". As part of this process, he has thrown overboard his chief economics strategist, Anatoly Chubais, his chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, and the Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev. These changes have coincided with rumblings from Russia about a shift of focus away from the West and towards the East, principally India, China and Iran.

But there were signs yesterday that the recent friction with Washington, which was particularly alarmed by the sackings, was beginning to ease. After initially turning down an invitation to Moscow from Russia's new Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, has agreed to a private meeting with him in Helsinki on 10 and 11 February, followed by an official visit to Moscow in March.

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Lesotho buries its stormy king

ROBERT BLOCK
Thaba Bosiu, Lesotho

As the sure-footed steeds of Basotho tribesmen escorted their dead king on his final journey through the mist of Lesotho's mountain passes, the ancestors of the Basotho people smiled upon their descendants. The skies opened and the rain came down in buckets.

A S Mohale, a palace official and relative of King Moshoe II, watched with satisfaction. The rain was a good sign. "It's a blessing for a great man who has died," he said. He was joined in his contentment by thousands of subjects who gathered yesterday morning in the shadow of Thaba Bosiu, "the mountain of the night", to pay their last respects to the king, one of Africa's few remaining royal heads of state.

The procession of tribesmen and military brass hands stretched for miles along the road from the king's favourite farm in Matsieng to Thaba Bosiu, birthplace of the Basotho nation and burial place of its kings. Behind the king's coffin,

wrapped in the royal standard and borne on a gun carriage, came the limousines of diplomats and dignitaries.

Among those who came here - 21 miles from the capital, Maseru - were Presidents Nelson Mandela of South Africa,

stamp. In 1990 he was exiled by the junta of Major-General Justin Lekhanya, which had toppled Jonathan. The king was replaced by his eldest son, Letsie David Mohato. Moshoeshe was allowed home in 1992 but not to reclaim his title.

Letsie, embarrassed at being king while his father was still alive, staged a palace coup and dissolved the country's first democratically elected government. Presidents Mandela, Mugabe and Masire stepped in to resolve the issue and also to return Moshoeshe to the throne, which he again ascended on 25 January 1995.

According to the eulogies yesterday, the king was working to resolve tension between the political parties and the military, still said to harbour political ambitions. He was also praised for his struggle against apartheid in South Africa, which surrounds his kingdom.

The Commonwealth Secretary, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, called the king a Basotho patriot who kept Lesotho "on the side of justice, human rights and decency" during the struggle. "King Moshoeshe died all too young, at the end of his youth and in the full maturity of his potential," Chief Anyaoku said. "He died still a promise, when the best was yet to come."

The king was born Constantine Bereng Seeiso on 2 May 1938, grandson of Moshoeshe I, the founder of the Basotho nation, who willingly made his country a British protectorate in 1868 as a defence against the Afrikaner settlers of the Orange Free State. Basotholand was ruled by Britain until independence in 1966, when the 27-year-old graduate of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was named King Moshoeshe II.

Mr Mohale said the king's schooling in Britain gave him the air of an intellectual and an English country gentleman, as well as that of a monarch. But if he enjoyed the sport of kings, his love of horses had more to do with his Sotho blood than Ascot. He also enjoyed keeping cattle, sheep and goats. It was his love of his livestock that led to his death: he was returning from visiting his ranches when his car crashed.



Moshoeshe: A turbulent monarch, twice exiled

Robert Mogabe of Zimbabwe, Frederick Chiluba of Zambia and Ketumile Masire of Botswana - the leaders of southern Africa's big powers.

The king's death in a road accident on 15 January caught everyone by surprise and was considered a loss for the whole region. He was 57 and had been back on the throne for less than a year after his second spell in exile. There was speculation that rivalry between politicians and the military could be rekindled and that trouble would return to the kingdom.

Thus the rain on the morning of the funeral was greeted with such relief. Traditionalists said it was a sign the king was leaving a legacy of peace and tranquility. It was not a gift that he had given his people often. The 30-year history of Lesotho has been one of democracy subverted by successive dictatorships, with Moshoeshe invariably at the centre of every political storm. He was an absolutist whose reluctance to accept his post-independence role as a constitutional monarch brought him into conflict with Lesotho's rulers and led to his being deposed twice and exiled.

The first time was for a few months in 1970 after a clash with the country's first Prime Minister, Leabua Jonathan. The king refused to be a rubber

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INTEREST RATE CHANGE

Investment and Savings

With effect from 27th January 1996, the interest rates for the following share and deposit accounts will be:

Current Issue Accounts	Gross % p.a.	Current Issue Accounts cont.	Gross % p.a.
SPECIAL 85		SUPER SAVER	
£5 days' notice		Instant access	
£100,000 and over	5.60	£5,000 and over	4.25
C.A.R. †	5.74	£1,000 to £4,999	3.25
£50,000 to £99,999	5.15	£250 to £249	3.00
C.A.R. †	5.27	INVESTMENT SHARE	
£25,000 to £49,999	4.51	Instant access	
C.A.R. †	4.60	£100 to £4,999	0.25
£10,000 to £24,999	4.22	For balances of £5,000 and over, bonus interest rates equivalent to those offered on the corresponding tiers of HIGH RISE will apply.	
C.A.R. †	4.30	OFFSHORE INSTANT ACCESS	
£5,000 to £9,999	3.26	Instant access by post through our Gibraltar office	
C.A.R. †	3.30	£100,000 and over	6.20
£2,500 to £4,999	2.77	£50,000 to £99,999	6.00
C.A.R. †	2.90	£10,000 to £49,999	5.50
TESSA ELITE	5.40	CLIENTS' RESERVE	
ELITE INTEREST ACCOUNT		Instant access	
Instant access	4.40	£100,000 and over	5.25
POSTMASTER		£50,000 to £99,999	4.85
Instant access by post		£25,000 to £49,999	3.00
£100,000 and over	5.60	£10,000 to £24,999	2.00
£50,000 to £99,999	5.30	£5,000 to £4,999	1.75
£25,000 to £49,999	5.10	£2,500 to £4,999	1.20
£10,000 to £24,999	4.85	£500 to £2,499	1.00
£1,000 to £9,999	4.15	£100 to £499	0.90
TOP 60		BUSINESS EXTRA	
60 days' notice		Instant access	
£100,000 and over	5.45	£100,000 and over	4.50
£50,000 to £99,999	5.15	£50,000 to £99,999	4.25
£25,000 to £49,999	4.25	£25,000 to £49,999	3.00
£10,000 to £24,999	3.00	£10,000 to £24,999	2.00
£5,000 to £4,999	2.25	£5,000 to £4,999	1.75
£2,500 to £4,999	2.00	£2,500 to £4,999	1.20
£500 to £2,499	1.75	£500 to £2,499	1.00
HIGH RISE		£100 to £499	0.90
Instant access		CHARITY ACCOUNT	
£100,000 and over	5.40	Instant access	
£50,000 to £99,999	4.85	£100,000 and over	5.00
£25,000 to £49,999	5.00	£50,000 to £99,999	4.75
£10,000 to £24,999	2.00	£25,000 to £49,999	3.00
£5,000 to £4,999	1.75	£10,000 to £24,999	2.00
£2,500 to £4,999	1.20	£5,000 to £4,999	1.75
£500 to £2,499	1.00	£2,500 to £4,999	1.20
£100 to £499	0.90	£500 to £2,499	1.00
HEADSTART		£100 to £499	0.90
Instant access		Closed Issue Accounts	
£250 and over	5.00	CASH COUNTER	
GOLD CURRENT ACCOUNT		£10,000 and over	2.00
£10,000 and over	2.00	£2,500 to £9,999	1.00
£2,500 to £9,999	1.00	£500 to £2,499	0.40
£500 to £2,499	0.40	Up to £499	0.25
Up to £499	0.25		

The interest rates on all other accounts will remain unchanged, except where individual notification is made. Interest will be paid gross to non-taxpayers subject to eligibility and the required registration. Otherwise interest will be paid after deduction of basic rate income tax.

† Gross Compounded Annual Rate where the interest is re-invested in the account.

* If the capital balance in the account is below or falls below this minimum initial investment, interest will be payable at the standard interest rate for the Investment Share Account (excluding bonus) for so long as the capital balance remains below the minimum.

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The barbarian

Being the illuminating tale of how 'Graham' stole 'Fifi' from under her master's nose. By **Mathew Horsman and David Hellier**

Eyeing the prize

Two years is a long time to stalk your prey. In the City's infamously short-term view, two years is a lifetime, and the risks mount with every passing week. Too many people get to know your plans. The adversary can build its fortifications, and the target's share price starts moving up, out of reach of a hostile bid.

It is amazing that Granada could target Forte for so long without anybody outside the inner circle knowing. But it happened: the secret was kept, at least until the few weeks before Granada finally pounced on 22 November.

Gerry Robinson, Granada's chief executive, determined a code name early in the game. From now on, Forte would be known as "Fifi," a suitably derogatory moniker that painted the luxury hotels company as fey, flitish and profligate. Granada would be "Graham", after Graham Parrott, the company's commercial director: a good honest name, unpretentious and reliable. Needless to say the names gave rise to plenty of rude jokes.

There were two companies that the Irish-born Robinson wanted to buy in 1993, neither of them a pushover. One, LWT, was a leading television production and broadcasting company. The other was synonymous with luxury and hospitality.

Robinson and his chief lieutenant Charles Allen spent the autumn of 1993 mulling over the possibilities. Robinson was the strategist, the visionary, guided by simple principles of cost control and economies of scale. Allen was the details man, indefatigable and voluble.

The two men liked what they saw in Forte: it was an underperforming company with valuable assets, and ripe for takeover. The chain of budget and mid-market hotels and one of the UK's largest roadside restaurant businesses, under the names Little Chef and Happy Eater, fitted perfectly, they believed, with Granada's own operations. The upmarket hotels were less attractive to a company such as Granada, which knew lots about catering and mid-market television but next to nothing about luxury accommodation. That could be overcome through massive asset sales if the bid succeeded.

However, there were more fundamental obstacles - not least the presence of family management who would fight strenuously, and an antiquated share structure that gave eight doddering, titled men - the Council of Forte - control of 50 per cent of the votes in any takeover battle.

"We just didn't think we could overcome that," Robinson says. He was also prepared to believe that Forte's new management team might be given support by shareholders, making a hostile bid difficult to mount. Nevertheless, Robinson asked Granada's bankers, the blue-chip establishment firm Lazard Brothers, to have a close look at Forte.

At Lazard, two men became

intimately involved in the bid discussions. John Nelson, the firm's vice-chairman and John Dear, the managing director, took a personal interest, aware that a hostile bid would generate millions for the bank.

The team decided to launch the LWT bid first.

Throughout 1994, the Granada management worked on integrating LWT with its existing television operations. "Once the LWT deal was done," Dear says, "it had to be bedded down before the company could sensibly look at another acquisition."

But Robinson and Allen kept a close watch on Forte, and received reports from Lazard at regular intervals. They also took turns visiting Forte hotels and restaurants: trying out menus, checking on service quality, timing waitresses. Says Robinson: "It was quite unfair - Charles got to stay at the George V while I stayed at the Posthouse in Ipswich."

As yet, the visits were informal. Allen and Robinson would exchange anecdotes about a visit to a Happy Eater, or muse about how one or another

Posthouse might be improved. By the summer of 1995, Robinson was itching for another acquisition.

For Granada, growth by takeover was a necessary strategy. The company's core business of TV rentals, broadcasting and leisure were expanding at a respectable rate and throwing off plenty of cash, but organic growth could not deliver the results Robinson was used to delivering to shareholders.

Moreover, the news from Lazard was encouraging. Forte's share price was weak and Granada's was strong. Nelson and Dear pointed out. Robinson had an excellent reputation in the City. They had also decided the Council of Forte might not be the obstacle that everyone had thought.

On 2 August, Forte announced stronger but still muted profits, following Sir Rocco's two-year restructuring programme. Robinson saw his chance. The next day, the bid team was put on full war footing. Robinson lined up extra support from Granada's brokers, Hoare Govett and BZW, and asked Lazard to come up

with a blueprint for a hostile offer. At a key meeting in August, the team that would work together throughout the bid gathered at Granada's modest office in Golden Square. In addition to Robinson, Allen, Nelson and Dear, Simon de Zoete represented BZW and Simon Bragg attended from Hoare Govett. Henry Staunton, Granada's finance director, and Jonathan Clare, of PR firm Citigate, completed the group.

Sensing that it was time to be serious, the team agreed new, sober code names for the operation: Granada would henceforth be "Madrid," while Forte was dubbed "Rome."

Meanwhile, Granada managers were sent out to Forte sites around the country, to gather intelligence. The aim was to identify where profits could be improved. Says Dear: "The whole bid did not make sense for Granada unless profits could be improved by £100m."

Adds Robinson: "We knew these were extremely good sites but that the important work would have to be done on the catering side. We developed a detailed pattern of the restaurants, graded their performance and estimated profits growth."

The other central issue was financing. Granada needed to be able to raise £1.8bn through the issue of new shares, and getting City backing was the group's first true test. (In the event, four nail-biting hours on the morning of the bid proved enough to complete the equity financing arrangements).

On top of that, another £2.5bn was to be raised from banks. Secrecy had been important up until August; now it became crucial. Granada could not risk seeing Forte's share price rise sharply or its own drop before the bid was unveiled.

Robinson had been keen to go in October, but the preparations proved too time-consuming. It was only on 14 November that the proposed bid was put to the Granada board and approved.

The following week was dominated by meetings and phone calls, as the offer document was prepared and the senior banks called in. Only three banks were approached - Chemical Bank, Barclays and ABN Amro - in an effort to keep the potential for leaks to a minimum. Granada also pre-cleared the acquisition with the Office of Fair Trading, agreeing to sell Forte's 26 Welcome Break motorway service areas to avoid a reference to monopoly regulators.

On the eve of the bid, the team boled up in Lazard's drab City offices until the early hours for the final preparations. Phone calls were put through to six major shareholders, alerting them to the impending bid. Top of that list was Mercury Asset Management, whose vice-chairman Carol Galley would play a pivotal role in the two months of the battle.

The market had begun to sense something was up. Forte's share price rose 35p in early November, and the rumours began to fly. Forte's own advisers, including its PR firm Brunswick, received calls from Forte head office on the eve of

Chronology

- 1994 Charles Forte opens Meadow Milk Bar, Regent Street.
- 1995 Forte wins contract to cater Heathrow Airport.
- 1998 Forte buys the Waldorf.
- 1998 Company goes public as Forte buys Georges V, Paris.
- 1970 Trust Houses merge with Forte, bringing Little Chef.
- 1985 Forte opens its first Travelodge.
- 1986 Forte links with PepsiCo to run Kentucky Fried Chicken.
- 1991 Gerry Robinson arrives at Granada.
- 1992 Sir Rocco Forte takes over from Lord Forte.
- 1994 MAM backs Granada in £725m successful bid for LWT.
- 22 Nov 1995 Granada bids £3.4 billion for Forte.
- 2 Dec Forte announces sale of Lillywhites.
- 7 Dec Forte issues defence document.
- 27 Dec Sale of Forte restaurants to Whitbread for £1.05bn.
- 8 Jan 1996 Council of Forte agrees to sell 780,000 Trust shares.
- 9 Jan Deadline for Granada's final bid. They boost offer 12.
- 15 Jan Rocco splits dual chairman and chief executive role.
- 16 Jan Granada launches £384m dawn raid on Forte shares.
- 19 Jan Rocco buys 9.9 million Forte shares in his own name.
- 23 Jan Granada reaches the 50 per cent needed for takeover at 2.30pm.

Research: Ben Summers

Chips v Chintz

On the Road

Happy Eater or Little Chef?

- Some outlets to close.
- Refurbishment and new menus in all cafes.
- Many cafes will incorporate popular franchises such as Pizza Hut and Burger King.
- Prices likely to rise.

Low-end Hotels

- Travelodge, Posthouse
- Travelodge will merge with Granada lodge.
- 50 sites to be "significantly expanded"
- Posthouses to be "rejuvenated" with "in-room entertainment and business services", and their restaurant menus expanded.
- Area-sensitive charges to maximise profits.

High-end Hotels

- Forte Exclusive, Forte Meridien.
- Granada to sell off all 103 of these luxury and business hotels.
- Forte will bid for them, along with the 52 Heritage hotels.

'I think most work is pointless. There are only three or four things you do a day that have any effect on your business'



[If you don't listen to your customers]

INSIDE

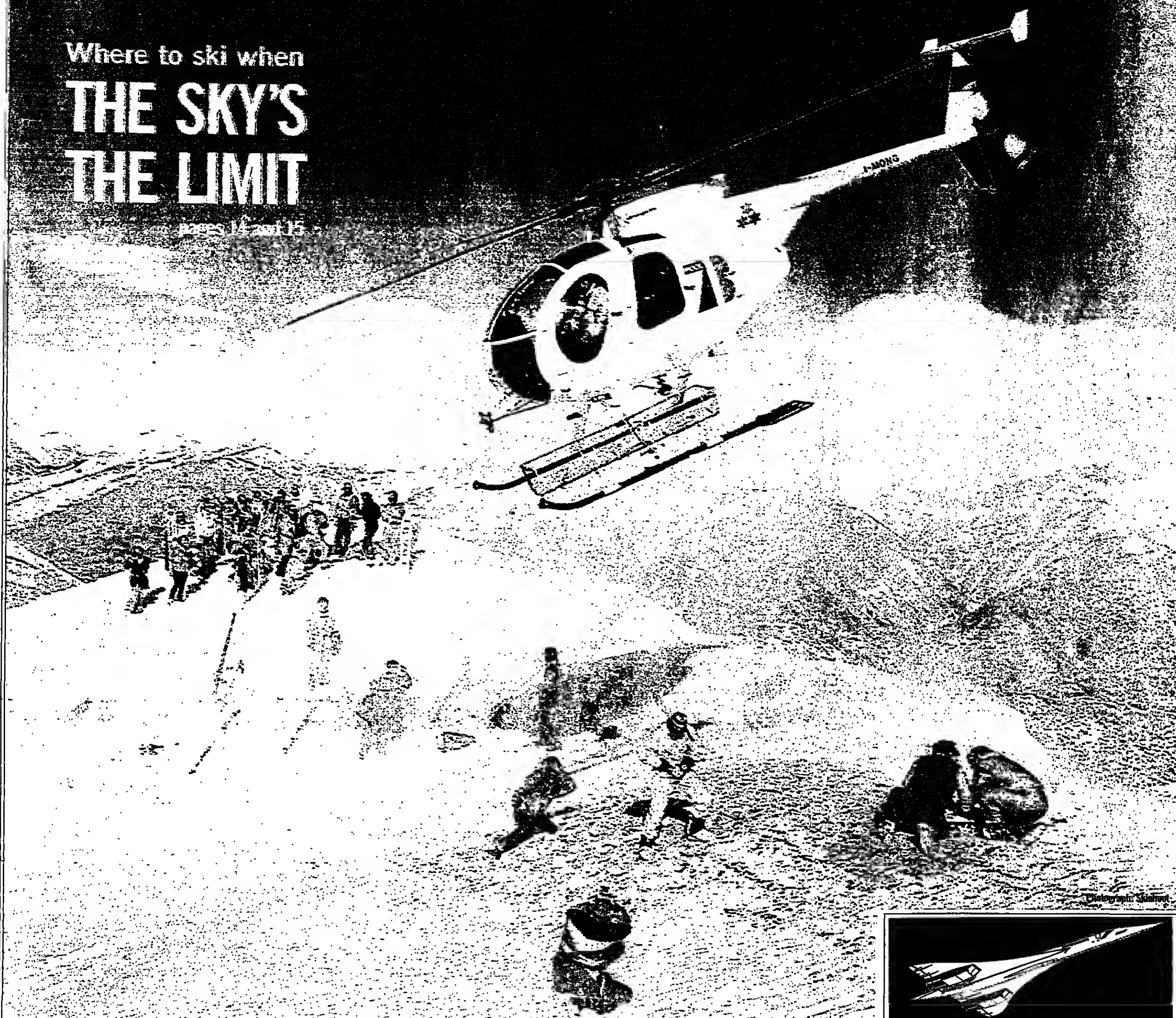
3 One night here. The way it we laugh. Easy. You calling thing has ha

17 Peking is up has a build and a popu sense of dis this is part is arguably capital city

Weekend

Where to ski when
**THE SKY'S
THE LIMIT**

pages 14-15



WIN A PORSCHE
BOXSTER
page 12

INSIDE STORIES

3 One night this bloke went "Oi, come here." The club went silent. He says "The way it works is: joke, punchline, we laugh." "Yeah," says his wife. So I went "Easy, Easy." And he went: "You calling my wife easy?" Next thing his hands are round my throat!

9 In 1812 Lord Byron could write, 'I awoke one morning and found myself famous,' after his 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' was received with rapture. In 1996, writers can achieve a kind of fame long before they have published anything at all

17 Peking is ugly, polluted, corrupt. It has a building site on each corner, and a population with a developed sense of disdain for foreigners. Yet this is part of the reason to visit what is arguably the most extraordinary capital city in the world

20 Salesmen have rarely enjoyed a good press, but even so Daewoo's findings were spectacularly damning: their customers rated car salesmen 'marginally higher than serial killers'. Pushy, intimidating and patronising were some of the kinder adjectives



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picture story



SILENCE, PLEASE

Pictures by Emma Boam. Story by Steven Poole.



It's Saturday morning at Keotish Town Library in London. A Falstaffian figure of a man, russet-bearded, trampishly chic, is ensconced in one of the floor-skimming armchairs, concentrating fiercely on *Roget's Thesaurus*. He's doing a crossword. "Undergrowth... 'Brackeo' or 'thicket'. Yes, but that doesn't fit that one, which is 'sprained'... That's a film one - can't find that." Someone suggests an answer. "Emma Peel?" Where can I find out 'Emma Peel'? Is it a current series?

The library is the place people come to find answers. Big answers, little answers. ("What's the chicken doing, mum?" "He's looking at a house.") They consult leaflets or medical encyclopedias, gaze at the small ads, read the papers, or drift around, just browsing. One businesslike woman, clutching a handful of CDs, has set herself on a course of musical education: "I'm working through the classics. I'm on B, for Bach."

Lunchtime, and an elderly lady has stopped at a revolving stand of paperback crime novels. She has no time for some of the library's recent innovations, such as the section heading "Goo", promising "A Good Read". "It's not very nice, is it? It's bloody patronising," she says with a girlish chuckle, waving her walking-stick for emphasis. "If I'm pushed for time, I go to crime paper-

backs. But every time I look at a woman's one, now, I find the detective is female. Now I don't mind that. I'm all in favour - but does she *have* to be a lesbian?"

In the children's section, three sisters are studying. Elizabeth, eight, is looking up information about the pyramids. "We're doing a project on Tutankhamun, and the face that he had on his grave. Not the face he had on." Six-year-old Rachel is "looking up the body, what's inside it, so when I'm older I can say to Mum and Dad, 'I already know, so you don't have to take me to school.'" She pauses. "I like the library, it's full of knowledge."

The afternoon wears somewhat sleepily on. People are idly leafing through newspapers. A woman, snug in a furry hat, sleeps, her head nodding forward into a splayed copy of an appreciation of John Gielgud. As darkness falls, the children's section starts emptying; soon all that remains is a pink-and-blue toy triceratops lying abandoned on the floor.

Folded up in armchair and a beige mac is Philip Toms, a newspaper vendor with bird-like blue eyes. He's been here, reading, for hours. "This is a crime thing. It's about a wealthy family, and the elder son went off the rails and ended up murdering the whole family. It's based on the true facts." He has his own theory about crime. "I think there's no deterrent at all, except for chaining 'em to the wall. It's the lifestyle. This is the Nineties: it's dog eat dog. That's why I come into public libraries."



THIS WEEKEND WHY NOT...


BUY
Heart of the Congos



Stock up on roast fish, collie weed and cornbread and settle back with this classic album. Lee "Scratch" Perry's production dates from 1977, when falsetto vocal duo The Congos dropped into Scratch's Black Ark studio with a number of key Biblical quotations on their minds. What resulted is one of the greatest roots reggae albums ever: a righteous skank through groves of Old Testament theology, underpinned by Scratch's trademark spooky shuffle and saturated with enough reverb to moisten the most dessicated palate. Listen out for cosmic moos, scrunching rowlocks and - *flump!* - the greatest lo-tech bass drum sound of all time. Available now for the first time on *disque compacte*, with five additional tracks from the vaults and Blood & Fire's fabbed packaging overkill. Yum.

Heart of the Congos (Blood & Fire label)


WATCH
Burnt by the Sun



There's a lot of white in *Burnt by the Sun*. White lace and long-fringed shawls; braids woven prettily with white ribbons, and the villain is a cad with a cable-knit cricket sweater. But this handsome film about well-off people is much too boisterous and badly behaved to be a British period-piece. It unfolds during a single long summer's day - but this is one of those Northern summers with a hint of melancholy. The year is 1936 and we're in Russia. The film adopts a child's eye view of the approaching atrocities of Stalinism, but anyone expecting unlearned angst or sentiment will be amazed by the droll humour in this generous, high-spirited film which most rhapsodic reviewers described glowingly as Chekhovian. It also won the Best Foreign Film Oscar and the Cannes Special Jury Prize.

£15.99 and available to rent


WIN
Theatre tickets and other prizes



Today is the 15th birthday of the Half Price Ticket Booth, a mecca for theatrical bargain-hunters who nab top-price tickets to West End shows at half price. To celebrate, stars from the shows will be gathering at 12.30pm for the Birthday Fanfare, songs from the shows and everything from leaping out of cakes (very *Singin' in the Rain*) to distributing hundreds of prizes including theatre memorabilia, merchandise, meals and many more. Tickets to some of the best West End shows will be on sale at the usual 50 per cent discount (plus the handling fee of £2), and the day sees the launch of the Booth Bonus Card, a new scheme to encourage Londoners to use this invaluable institution. Can you afford to miss this opportunity to meet the cast of *The Fields of Ambrosia*, the hotly-anticipated "electric-chair musical" opening next week?

Leicester Square, London WC2


JOIN
Children's Birdwatch Weekend



Not everyone is miserable about the weather. The folks at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds are rather excited because the cold weather across Europe should send some tremendously unlikely species into gardens across the land, from waxwings to Scandinavian arctic redpolls. These rare visitors fly over when food sources are scarce there. Children wanting to take part should (swaddled in scarves) watch their garden or local park for one hour this weekend and record the highest number of each species of bird seen at any one time. Birds that land on the ground or in trees and bushes should be counted, but not those flying overhead. Will the blue tit topple the starling from its number one spot? Will the song thrush make a comeback this year?

For free information pack and voting details, write to YOC Big Garden Birdwatch, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL

VISIT
The National Railway Museum



Have you ever seen a woman clipping tickets on a train? British Rail may well be an equal opportunities employer, but from growing announcements about leaving on the line to management warnings against privatisation to surly guards telling you as little as possible, the image of the railways is overwhelmingly male. Thanks to "Oh! Mrs Porter", the National Railway Museum exhibition, we now know that the first recorded woman workers were gatekeepers over 350 years ago. By the First World War, there were women porters, ticket collectors, cleaners and Annie Eva Martin was sworn in as the first woman special railway constable on 5 March 1917, but the first woman driver didn't begin work until 1981. The exhibition is an entire social and political history. Not just for anoraks.

National Railway Museum, Leeman Road, York YO2 4JY (01904 621263)

EDITED BY DAVID BENEDICT

Oooh, er, cripes

For Steve Coogan, a part in a children's movie; for Lee Evans, a lead in the new Bruce Willis thriller. As far as Hollywood is concerned, the bloke with the enormous dry-cleaning bills is Britain's hottest comic property. By Jim White

One evening earlier this week, Lee Evans was finishing off a day's rehearsal for his all-new West End show in a hired room in Soho. He had just completed running through the punishing opening sequence in which he falls down a Busby Berkeley-style flight of stairs, tumbles through a trap-door and ends up marooned under the stage, unable to communicate with his audience; and all in about 20 seconds. As he finished, awash with sweat, panting, he found himself confronted by the woman who had booked the room for the next session.

"She takes one look at me, and of course I'm all like, wired," says Evans, recalling the incident by performing a mime of a very wired person. "And she goes, 'Oh dear.' And I says 'What?' And she says, 'Oh dear, I'm sorry.' And I says 'What?' And she says, 'I'm not sure if I can be much use, you need professional help.' It turns out she's running a relaxation class there."

Anyone who has seen Lee Evans on stage would quickly conclude he is well beyond the reach of relaxation classes: limbs defying all known rules of skeletal construction; sweat washing from every pore; face gurning into the sort of pose your mother used to warn you about adopting in case the wind changed, he tumbles around in a Norman Wisdom cast-off suit in the sort of way that suggests major damage is inevitable. Relaxing it isn't: his is the kind of exhibition of clowning perfected by Buster Keaton, a physical *tour de force* that leaves his audience exhausted and him with one of the highest dry cleaning bills in Essex.

"There's this Greek bloke in Southend does my cleaning," Evans says. "At one point he refused to clean them: 'Sorry I no clean them anymo', Mr Lee.' Then he came up with this new formula to clean suits that have really had it, make them look fabulous again. And he did it by experimenting on my suits. I go through suits at a terrible rate. See, it's the sweat, it rots the stitches."

Just at the moment, worrying where his next suit is coming from is not a problem for Lee Evans. In 1996 he will undertake the following: a solo stand-up (and fall-down) season in the West End, a one-hour special for ITV, a six-part series for Channel 4 and a six-part series for NBC television in America. Oh, and two Hollywood movies, including one which starts filming in April, directed by Luc Besson and starring Bruce Willis. He is, in short, Britain's hottest comic property, facing the kind of career uptake, he says (adopting a Donald Sinden accent) "that many a thesp would give their right bollock for". Not had, this, for a lad who when he left school could barely read.

Lee seems to be the comedy name of the moment. There's Lee Cornes, a stalwart of the London circuit; there's Lee Hurst, whose shining pate is the weekly butt, as it were, of Nick Hancock in BBC1's *They Think It's All Over*; and there's Lee Sharpe, presently something of a joke in Manchester United's midfield. But any suggestion that Evans is a Lee-come-lately is to ignore the long evening of graft that preceded his overnight success. Evans's dad, Dave, was a jollying entertainer, who played piano, sax and drums on the club circuit in the Sixties and Seventies. Our Lee spent most of his childhood by night sitting in the car outside gigs with a shandy and a packet of crisps and by day flitting from school to school, pulling faces at the back of class in the vain hope of being accepted. When his parents finally settled down, in Southend, he was a teenager and virtually uneducated. So he took himself off to art college in Thurrock (in between getting married at 17 to Heather, who is still his wife), where he found outlet for the thing he was good at: music.

"I was the drummer in a band called the Forgotten Five. And that's what we were: forgotten, big time. We did our own stuff, played places like Shrimpers in Brentwood and the Esplanade Southend and we were crap. Our lead singer snapped at anything. His name was David Salmon. At gigs you'd be drumming away and suddenly you'd hear this 'Boinggg' and you'd turn round and Dave's guitar's wrapped round this bloke's head and the bloke's going 'I never said a thing'. And Dave's going 'You bloody did'. That was nighty. He's a postman now, Dave. He came to see us in Cardiff on the last tour. He could not believe it, there's 3,500 people in this hall and it blew him away. Afterwards he said: 'It's everything we dreamed of as kids. I just never thought, man. Not you Lee.'"

If Dave was surprised, even more astonished would be some of the people who witnessed Evans in his early days as a comedian. Driven by penny into trying his hand at everything (including a spell as assistant to Ted, the



Photograph by Herbie Aitken

spiritualist window dresser for a Southend department store), he spent most nights at talent contests in Essex pubs, doing gags like "My wife's so fat she ain't got measurements, she's got time zones."

"One time I got picked up by this small time agent," Evans recalls. "You'd go great in Manchester, you would. You'd smash 'em," he says. So he put me on this tour of Manchester, Bradford and Bolton working men's clubs. And go smash I did. I'd turn up on stage and the cry would go out: 'Kill

'im'. These were clubs where the cabaret was booked for target practice. Take Liverpool. Liverpool's a comedy city and that was the trouble. I weren't funny. One night this bloke in the audience went 'Oi, come here'. And everyone in the club stopped and it went silent as I walked off the stage towards him. He says: 'You see the way it works here is: joke, punch-line, we laugh.' Then his wife next to him went: 'Yeah, he's right, joke, punch-line, then we laugh.' So I went: 'Easy, easy.' And he went: 'You calling my wife easy?' Next

thing he's got me on the floor with his hands round me throat going: 'You twat.' And everyone's going: 'ave 'im Bert, go 'head, eh, do 'im'. I only escaped because the manager got me out through the kitchens."

Like everything he says, this anecdote is accompanied by a furious mime which ends with Evans clutching his own throat, choking while attempting to punch himself on the nose. He is not one to let an experience pass which can be later workshopped up into a comedy routine.

"I can't stop staring at people," he says. "I nearly got beat up at Heathrow last year, I was staring at this bloke and he goes: 'What you staring at.' I said 'No, no, no, I'm not.' But I was. And he went for me. He had this funny twist in his back, sec."

And off he goes again, performing a frankly schizophrenic routine in which a man with a funny twist in his back struggling along with a couple of suitcases starts threatening himself: "What you staring at, I'm not. I'll do yah. I'm not. I'll have you. No, stop. Aaargh."

At the end of which, Evans collapses in high-pitched hysterics: "Hurururur. Hurururur. Hurururur."

Undaunted by his Liverpool mauling in the mid-Eighties, Evans decided to try his hand closer to his Southend home, on the London pub circuit.

"This was the time when to be a comedian there meant saying 'Thatcher' and everyone hissing," he says. "Well I used to come on, do my stuff, fall over and that, and you could see the audience just thinking: 'What the bloody hell...'"

From there, it was just a short step to the Edinburgh Festival, the summer feeding ground of the London circuit. An easy option, you would have thought, after the gruelling apprenticeship in Liverpool.

"No, it was difficult in its own way," he says. "You feel you don't belong, because you haven't got the brains. I always feel inadequate, whatever I do. I use that as a motivation, though. I think: how comes I'm not accepted?"

After five years of summering in Edinburgh, he finally was accepted, winning the Perrier Award, the annual title for best new comedian which generally comes complete with a fat television contract.

"I couldn't believe I'd won it. I'd never won anything, ever, nothing. And I won it, I mean, it was..." And he performs a mime of an ecstatic person in such a way that you believe it probably was like that for him.

The thing that really projected Lee Evans into the upper reaches, however, was his appearance last year in Peter Chelsom's film *Funny Bones*. A remarkable piece about the bastard off-spring of a great American stand-up finding himself adopted by a sad family of English end-of-pier comics, it was a cult hit in America.

"Everyone loved it," he says, "but it kind of disappeared just as it was taking off. It doesn't matter to me, because everyone in the industry went and said [adopts a big film-producer style American accent] 'Let's sign the kid up for movies. You wanna do movies kid?' And then what happened was they present you with a script where you're lost in a desert with a dog and you have to look down at the dog and say: 'Will we ever get out of here Charlie?' And you go: 'I ain't doing that.' I turned loads down. About 10 I turned down. But, sec, I didn't want to go too big. I'm still learning, the worse thing you can do is set yourself up as something and then die on your arse. When Luc Besson came along, hang, wallop, I'm there. I signed this thing not to say anything about it. But I tell you, Bruce Willis is in it. And the reason I'm doing it is: I'll learn. Next to him, you know, he'll be all [adopts a big Willis-like accent] 'Don't put the camera on me there buddy, the light's bad.' And I'll be all 'Oooh, er, cripes, so that's how to do it.'"

"To tell you the truth," he adds, "my pants are full. Up to the brim. That's the way I am. It's like this live show. I've sunk a lot of money into it - eek - I mean I earn a bit of money last year, what's it for? I don't drink. I don't hire it, so I've decided to spend it on the show."

And spend he has: on props like a piano with a mind of its own, or a set of spinning plates which rotate in slow motion to facilitate a typically surreal sketch about, well, a slow-motion circus plate-spinner.

"See, I'm terrified of falling. It's the West End, I'm terrified of not giving them enough. I'm a bit paranoid about that. It's my biggest drawback, that, I waste a lot of time and money."

After he has concluded a whole performance of a photo session, in which he pulls a thousand faces and strikes a hundred rubber-limbed poses and leaves his audience of two damp with laughing, Evans heads back to his tiny little Soho office.

Walking through Soho with Lee Evans takes a bit of time, what with all the conversations he has with people, the little impromptu performances he gives and the amount of laughing he does. Others with faces made famous by the telly must get stopped by their public, but the difference with Lee Evans is, it's him doing the stopping. "All right mate, how you doing?" he asks a rather bemused youth in a Russian hat before shaking him by the hand; "Fanks mate, appreciate it," he says to a business man who let him pass through a narrow bit of the pavement; and "Ere that's a fantastic laugh, do it again, go on, go on," he says to a giggling teenage girl, who duly obliges by giggling uncontrollably.

"That's lovely, that is," he says as he walks on. "What a smashing laugh, eh?"

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Photographer: Andrew Lamb

We buy rust. We sell romance

Michael Cripps rescues and reconditions old brass bedsteads. Clive Fewins met him



Michael Cripps hreathed heavily on to the brass knobs at the base of the large Victorian cast-iron bed with its ornate semi-circular headboard. "This one's not for sale," he declared.

Mr Cripps, who runs Once Upon a Time, has some 400 antique brass and iron bedsteads in 4,000 sq ft of old farm buildings in the village of Ripley, Surrey. He treats them like an extended family. "I put a high price on my favourite beds in the hope that they won't sell," he said. "That way, I gain the pleasure of viewing them daily for a few years."

One of his favourites is an all-brass monolith, made in 1872 at the Birmingham factory of James Schoolbred and Co, retailers of Tottenham Court Road London—a company that eventually became Maples. Fully restored, the bed's price tag is £4,750. It has been in the showroom a year.

"The problem is that many of the beds inside that we do want to sell and in which we have worked very hard, often don't sell, while the unrenovated ones outside sell well," Mr Cripps said.

He explained that customers would rather come and choose from the sad-looking unrenovated

specimens lying out in the cold. "It's rather like visiting a dog's home. Customers like to select a really down-at-heel one and then see what we can do to bring it roaring back into life." Mr Cripps has devoted the last 18 years of his life to rescuing antique piles of rust and selling them for an average of £1,000-£1,200 for a fully-restored Victorian cast-iron model.

He is one of half a dozen or so specialist restorers of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian antique bedsteads. Companies like Once Upon a Time report steady sales over the past few years, with no more dips due to the recession than any other retailer might expect.

However, restorers believe the supply is drying up, meaning prices will inevitably rise and make bedsteads purchased now a good investment for the future. "The majority of my customers don't look at it this way, however," Mr Cripps said. "They are often young people who have set their hearts on a genuine antique metal bedstead and are prepared to save up for a couple of years for something different from a divan with a headboard."

According to Mr Cripps, the beds are virtually all different. "Nearly all manufacturers had their own designs, so there is a huge variety if you know where to look. The quality of the originals is usually so high that they come up beautifully—especially when they are taken back to the original metal and harnessed. By comparison, modern reproductions are utterly feeble."

"The heyday of manufacturing was around the onset of the Crimean War in 1854, when Florence Nightingale focused the eyes of the nation on health issues as never before. Metal bedsteads, considered more healthy than the traditional rosewood and mahogany versions, rapidly found their way into hospitals and schools. Before long, the general mass of the population made the change."

The other usual requirement from customers is that the bed should be "stretched". This means extending it from its likely 4ft 6ins width to the 5ft more acceptable to modern tastes. The usual means of doing this is by inserting extra decorative pieces within the additional iron or steel bars. It is a practice frowned upon in some sections of the trade because it means the bed is no longer authentic.

"I used to have misgivings, but we only find one 5ft bed to every 200 or so 4ft 6ins or 4ft beds that come

our way," said Mr Cripps. "Extending beds helps to keep prices down and gives old beds a new life."

Most of the old bedsteads that end up in workshops come in via "runners" in the antique trade, who quite often bring them from Ireland, or from Spain, Portugal and Morocco, where modern divan beds are slowly replacing the metal ones.

According to Jonathan Tebb, who runs A Barn Full of Brass Beds in Lincolnshire, more than 90 per cent of them were originally made in Birmingham.

"By the 1870s, it is said 6,000 brass and iron bedsteads were being produced, vast numbers of which were exported," he said. "They were not only made for the well-to-do, with pearl inlays, faceted mirrors, scroll work and superior castings, but also for the ordinary folk."

"In Victorian times, the bed was almost a status symbol, like cars are regarded by some today. But the simple ones were in many ways the most elegant, and are often rarer, as they were the models that were more often thrown away."

While Mr Cripps either sells his beds in their original harnessed and lacquered have metal form, or paints them black, Mr Tebb specialises in painting his beds in the

range of National Trust colours—mainly French grey, sugar-hag blue, cork green, fox red and Sudbury yellow. Most of his beds are restored to order, the customer coming to him to choose first.

"Generally, my clients, who come from throughout the country, prefer this approach," he said. "I tell them I buy rust and I sell romance."

Once Upon a Time, The Green Ripley, Surrey (01483 211330). A Barn Full of Brass Beds, Abbey House, Eastfield Road, Louth, Lincs (01507 603173). Manor Farm Antiques, Oxfordshire (01865 300303). Bed Bazaar, Framlingham Suffolk (01728 723756). The Antique Bedstead Company, Chelmsford (01245 471137). Morphous, Elgin House Antiques, Tetbury (01666 504068). Seventh Heaven, Clwyd (01691 777622).

Reproduction brass and iron bedsteads available from: Enchanted House, St Blazey, Cornwall (01726 812213). Deplich Designs Ltd, London (0181-687 0867) sell their reproduction metal bedsteads throughout the UK.



bazaar

Bestsellers: Top 10 at Lakeland Plastics

From a small company selling plastic boxes, Lakeland Plastics has evolved into a mail-order phenomenon. Much of its success is based on the fact that many of the ideas for new gadgets are supplied by its customers. One of these is the new mini mix, a tool for whisking one egg white; another is the non-drip honey spoon, which perches on the jar rim. The success of the wonder whisks and Mermaid roasting tins is

explained by their starring roles on BBC2's *Delia Smith's Winter Collection*. Call 015394 88100 for a catalogue.

- | | |
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| 1 Mini mix | £3.95 |
| 2 Honey spoon | £2.95 |
| 3 Cast-iron veg shredder | £23.95 |
| 4 Spice tower | £16.95 |
| 5 Artificial azalea bush | £9.95 |
| 6 Wonder whisk | £2.95 (two) |
| 7 Mermaid roasting tin | £23.95 |
| 8 Dishwasher fragrance | £2.35 |
| 9 Magic Glove | £4.95 |
| 10 Mary Berry flour sifter | £1.99 |

Good thing

Heart apron, £9.95

Foodie partners will probably appreciate this red-check heart apron on Valentines Day more than a gift-wrapped box of rum truffles. It's made from 100 per cent cotton, is generously sized and reasonably priced. Other Divertimenti presents for favourite cooks include heart-shaped cake tins (£6.95 a pair), china *coeur à la crème* moulds (£19.95) and a pretty Early American heart-pattern ceramic shortbread mould (£19.95). Add £3.95 p&p. Order a.s.a.p. (for 14 Feb) from the Divertimenti catalogue (0171-386 9911), or try the shops at 45-47 Wigmore Street, London W1 and 139 Fulham Road, SW3.

Mad thing

Click phone, £29.95

You don't have a mobile phone but would like your friends to think you have. What do you do? Turn to the Innovations catalogue and order this cunning "home phone that looks like a mobile". To use, pull out the dummy aerial, and flip open the mouthpiece. To close, push back the aerial, click shut and put down anywhere. The only drawback is the subtle giveaway of a curly flex, which even if it is six metres long ("to let you roam") won't fool anyone. From Innovations: 01793 514666.

Checkout Oxfam

Oxfam, Queen's Road, Bristol (0117 929 4890)

What is it? An Oxfam shop, but without the racks of lurex jumpers and outgrown tweed jackets that most people shop at Oxfam for. This shop is one of three Oxfam shops which stock only Oxfam's Fair Trade products—intended to benefit the people who actually make the products by giving them a fair price (the others are in Chester and Chichester).

Stock: Best sellers are the more useful or consumable items such as the delicious Café Direct coffee, grown by Latin-American and African co-operatives, the Fair Trade chocolate, made in Switzerland from fairly traded beans and sugar, or the recycled Oxfam writing paper. Intriguingly, not all the goods are marked with information on where and how they're made.

Do buy: Bolivian dried bananas (£1.40 a pack), Café Direct coffee (£2.49 a jar), Indian doormat (£7.45), Guava jam from Burkina Faso (£1.65), laundry basket from the Philippines (£18.75)

Don't buy: The expensive knick-knacks that sell well at Christmas but gather dust the rest of the year, ie. flowery blue porcelain pigs from Thailand, carved wooden tiger masks

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AUCTIONS

There are spates of bobbin faking. Horse bones are lathe-turned, carved, then buried in manure to artificially age them

Pre-war televisions, highly collectable, are doubling in price every couple of sales at Phillips Bayswater. Fewer survive than Stradivarius violins. At one of Phillips's twice-yearly "mechanical music" sales last September, a table-top HMV set made in 1936—the first year of public broadcasting—fetched £2,875. In Tuesday's sale (12 noon) a 1936 Marconi 706 television radio, with a screen the size of a tennis ball and a walnut cabinet is estimated at £2,000-£2,200. There are commission bids in excess of that and it will probably fetch over £3,500.

Phillips, with a virtual monopoly on the vintage telly market, gets the highest prices. The result is that artful collectors have been buying sets at Sotheby's and Christie's South Kensington for a song and reselling them for nearly three times as much at Phillips. After a 1936 floor-standing HMV had been sold for £990 at Christie's South Kensington last year, an uncannily similar set turned up at Phillips's May sale, fetching £2,645. Phillips has given an

estimate of £2,500-£3,500 on a 1937 Marconi 702 with mirror lid, bought for £990 at Sotheby's last October. But the buyer prefers to hang on to it.

Some post-war tellys are going down in price. A 20in white Kera-colour with classic globe shape (made in 1970, inspired by the 1969 moon landing) was worth £500 at auction two years ago when Michael Bennett-Levy's guidebook *Historic Televisions* ignited the telly-collecting craze. The specimen in this week's sale is estimated at only £150-£250 because every serious collector now has one. Meanwhile, the supply of pre-war models has all but dried up. Phillips sold 15 in 1993, 10 in 1994 and only one last year. Will this week's be the first and last for 1996?

The nearest thing to a Kera-colour in the homes of 18th and 19th century lacemakers was a 10in high water-filled spherical glass vase, back-lit by a glass oil lamp of about the same size, that focussed light onto their meticulous work.

They feature in Wright of Derby's wondrously illuminated paintings—but were not bright enough to prevent many lacemakers going blind. Two lacemakers' lamps with hollow stem and glass globe are estimated at £100-£150 each in Phillips's sale of textiles, lace and period costume, Tuesday (11am). Only one or two a year crop up at auction. The sale has plenty of pencil-like turned bone and wood lace-making bobbins decorated with spangles at one end, many carved with names and mis-spelt lines such as "I long to be mared". Lots of 24 are estimated at £150-£200. From time to time, there are spates of bobbin faking in the antique world. Horse bones are lathe-turned, carved, then buried in manure to artificially age them. Phillips's Anne Marie Benson spots them because their incisions, made with modern tools, are too sharp, and because they lack signs of wear and the slightly glossy patina caused by perspiration.

John Windsor

Planet kitsch

The Sixties Space Age promised a world of silver suits and inflatable furniture. But it's only now that the high street can deliver. By Jonathan Glancey

Space is in danger of becoming a black hole, or a hubbly-bubble, in the memory of the media. Having just listened to Radio 4's *Beam Me Up Scotty*, "a nostalgic zoom through Space Age pop culture", I find myself, if not stunned, fazed, and out of time.

Beam Me Up Scotty tells me (a child of the Sixties) that I was brought up in age when we all had inflatable plastic chairs, wore disposable paper underwear, and boasted a Lava lamp in every room. Yet, for those of us who lacked central heating, fitted carpets and refrigerators (our first fridge came in 1967), such novelties were the stuff of dreams and of Tommy Robert's dreamy "Mr Freedom", shop-of-the-future in the King's Road. I bought my first Lava lamp last year.

I was clearly not a part of Radio 4's Space Age, but then few of us were. As children we waited impatiently for next week's *Eagle* to see Dan Dare ("pilot of the future") battling with the Mekon. We thrilled to Soyuz and Saturn rocket launches taking Reds and Yanks with crew cuts and the Right Stuff towards the moon, yet the world we inhabited was more steam age than Space Age.

We knew about Sputniks, looked forward to sherbert and rice-paper "flying saucers" on the walk back from Mass on Sunday, craved Lyon's Malt Zoom ice-llies, could hum the tinny tune of "Telstar" by the Tornados, and wanted to be Daleks; yet the Comet was still a steam-hauled flyer from Euston to Manchester, and Evening Star the last steam locomotive built by British Railways (Swindon, 1960). A Constellation was one of the triple-finned American turbo-prop that arched over the tree-tops. Mars was a bar of "thick, thick" chocolate (price: 6d), and Milky Way the sweet you could eat between meals (3d).

My first space rocket (6s 11d) was launched with the aid of a catapult. On a good day it could penetrate the playground-sphere, commencing its parachute-assisted descent to Earth at about 100ft. It was a lot less sophisticated than my Mamod SEA2 steam engine, which, powered by meths and water, could (when attached to the right cogs and eccentrics) polish a set of table knives within the hour, whilst intoxicating guinea-pigs and terrifying cats.

Equally, the veteran transformer that controlled my model trains was much more sophisticated than the miniature RAF Javelin, Huoter and Lightning fighters (as advertised in *Eagle*) that, filled with noxious gas, rocketed across the garden so much faster (and more dangerously) than defunct

Airfix Lancasters stuffed with flaming, paraffin-soaked rags and catapulted from bedroom windows.

There was more fun to be had from making walkie-talkies from two tin cans and a length of string than from a smug classmate's utterly wet and weedy Dan Dare 2-way Space Radio. And, instead of watching *Fireball XL5* or *Lost in Space* on the black-and-white telly, a much better way to tour the cosmos was to climb a tall tree, and, from its swaying cockpit, follow the vapour trails of military jets reaching for the stratosphere from nearby air bases.

Perhaps the best way of all was to snuggle under dogs and bedclothes on pipe-cracking nights, kitted-out with hot water bottle, torch and *The Swift Book of Space Flight*, and dream one's seven-year-old self to Andromeda and galaxies beyond.

Girls' (chiz chiz) dreams of space had little to do with disintegrator guns and knowing the top speed of an X-15 rocket plane; girls dreamt of dressing up and pirouetting into Narnia and Oz-like worlds, or variations on the mysterious island where Sandra, a kidnapped orphan, has been taken to train in a secret ballet school (a tale told weekly in *July*).

Teenage sisters brought the Space Age closer to home with giggly discussions turning on the "pbwort" factor of Apollo astronauts. Neil Armstrong's giant leap for mankind seemed rather less important to womankind (now students of "Cathy and Claire's Problem Page" in *Jackie*) than whether he was cuter than "Buzz" Aldrin.

By then they had developed a crush on Captain Kirk or Mr Spock (having abandoned Napoleon Solo and Ilya Kuryakin). To be fair, the micro-mini-skirted Lieutenant Uhuru was beginning to exert a strange attraction on us boys (enuff said).

Girls were the final frontier for Space cadets, but, sufferin' satellites (as Dan Dare would have said), all that embarrassing stuff was acon in the future. Uot then, space would remain the stuff of catapults, burnt fingers, electric shocks, scorching jets of super-heated steam and stary yarns read under blankets. Today, the Sixties' Space Age has caught up with the world of the Jupiter probe and Hubble space-camera: inflatable furniture, silver dresses, plastic hipsters, rocket-style Lava lamps have only now landed in the high street, 30 years after the late, great Space Age of the Sixties.

"Beam Me Up Scotty", presented by John Peel: 10am R4, Friday 2 Feb



A life in the shift of

Navin Patel, owner of Raj's Newsagents in Ashford, Kent

Navin Patel, 40, and his father, bought a newsagent's licence in 1971, having been expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin. He is married and has two daughters, 12 and nine, and a six-year-old son. They live above the shop.

"I get up at 5am. We are Hindus and even one has to have a bath and pray before breakfast. I pray for about 15 minutes. My wife does half an hour, and my mother-in-law, for an hour. And for the last two he's been raising money for the new Hindu temple in Neasden. It was Dad who first saw the shop advertised in *Dalton's Weekly*. 'This is a very good shop,' he said. 'In five or six years we will make our money back. He was right. It's been a gold mine. I have three cars. One is a Mercedes.

"In the Eighties we bought a nursing home, too. My wife works there. Sometimes she works until 4am and still gets up at 6a to cook for us. It's in our genes: work, work. I sometimes think Indian people are mad. I have a boy who works for me - I am a good boy, but he doesn't like working. Like some English people, he thinks if he worked a 40-hour week he's worked very hard. I work about 100 hours a week.

"At 5.30am my head boy arrives and goes into the garage and counts out the paper for the paper rounds. The shop opens at 6am. There are always people waiting.

"I have breakfast at 8am - two toasts and some Bombay mix. I eat Indian food, crisps and fizzy drinks like my children. was one of the first Indian men in Ashford. Sometimes people call us 'Paki' bastards but not often. Bricks have been chucked through the window. But it's not persons. We have shutters now.

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The man behind the Rock Family Trees is back. This time he's charting 40 years of Manchester United. By James Rampton

supplied by Jim White, (feature-writer on this paper and author of *400 You Watching Liverpool?*) and checked by the *Newsnight* reporter and Jeffrey Archer biographer, Michael Crick ("the world's greatest expert on United," according to Frame).
Frame then spent three months on top of an eight-by-four plywood drawing-board. In his words, he was "perched like a gnome on a cushion, surrounded by scraps of paper, reference-books, dictionaries, pens, rulers and bottles of liquid paper. Only I know where everything is. When I die, someone's going to have a hell of a job sorting everything out."

Now 53, Frame first got the idea for Family Trees when at the end of the Sixties he dropped out of his respectable job as a buildings surveyor for the Prudential and founded his own underground rock magazine called *ZigZag*. "In 1972 I did a long interview with Al Cooper, who had started Blood, Sweat and Tears," he recalls, speaking from his 16th-century thatched cottage near Aylesbury. "I was trying to explain in an article how he had moved from one band to another, when at that moment it dawned on me that if I drew it out in a family tree it would be so much clearer." A cult was born, and over the next quarter-century hundreds of Frame's works of art appeared in *Sounds*, *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Rolling Stone*. They culminated last year in a BBC2 series - *Rock Family Trees*.

It may be painstaking, but the Family Tree is not an anorak thing, says Frame. "Usually the people who say that are those who haven't read it. I know tran-

spotters and, believe me, I'm not in their ball-game. It's got a lot of information, but if you actually read it, it's written with a lightness. It's amusing and full of anecdotes."

It is true that in among the morass of facts, many gems shine out. Take the Family Tree's comments on United's signing of Bryan Robson in 1981: "For the

next 12 years he never put a foot wrong for United; the only mistake he made was the curly perm he sported the day he signed."

Frame's next projects are Family Trees of the England team since 1966 and his beloved Luton Town FC – "the soot in the atmosphere always created a fog at Luton, but they were my very first heroes".

ing himself into a (thatched) cottage industry. "I'd love to have a team of monks working to my instruction while I sit and have a joint," he says. "But it doesn't work like that, because my style is so idiosyncratic. If I had a team replicating my work, it'd become too train-spotterish. I interviewed Leonard Cohen once and he told me he's taken some territory

in his field and he tries to main-
tain the same."

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How a modest Italian ornament became a priceless masterpiece by Michelangelo

This week, if you believe Dr Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt, the world recovered a great treasure. The circumstances were delightfully cinematic. For years the gloomy lobby of a Fifth Avenue mansion has contained a small stone sculpture of a cupid with a quiver in the shape of a lion's paw. The object was in plain view but so familiar that it was, effectively, invisible. One day, though, as Dr Brandt was passing, the lobby had been illuminated for some special event. Peering through the glass, she saw the sculpture brightly lit for the first time. One can imagine the scene as an Annunciation, a beam of golden light bearing down on the sacred object. Dr Brandt's heart beat a little faster. The *contrapposto* of the back, the tightness of the curls, the model-

ling of the lion's paw... surely this was no humble piece of garden statuary. After further research, and with much trepidation, she advanced the theory that the work was actually by Michelangelo. New York had lost a modest Italian ornament and gained a priceless work of art - a brilliant trade by anybody's standards.

Dr Brandt has found support among other art historians. Our own Dr Nicholas Penny, of the National Gallery, weighed in on her side, telling the *New York Times* that "The more one looks at it, the more it grows on one, not only as a remarkable work of art but something that makes sense as a work of Michelangelo."

What exactly does it mean, though, to "make sense" as a work of Michelangelo? It is an impor-

tant question, as Dr Penny has good reason to know, because the last art-world fuss over the authenticity of a Michelangelo came much closer to home. It arose over the reattribution - the promotion, in effect - of the National Gallery's *Entombment of Christ*. The case against was put by an enraged Professor James Beck: "To make the *Entombment* a Michelangelo", he said, "diminishes the creativity of Michelangelo. It means placing a third-rate work at his doorstep. That is a violation of his integrity." (To have 20th-century academics presume what your integrity consists of might be considered a larger violation still, but let that pass.) Integrity is important to us, and has been for centuries. The quality has another name, too, and one



THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

rather more pertinent to these questions of artistic provenance - "authenticity". And here we arrive at a paradox. In its larger moral sense, authenticity (as applied to people or their behaviour) contains some notion of intransigence or resistance to the smoothing impulse of society. We detect authenticity in humans by those features in them which don't conform to pattern. In art history, however, quite the opposite is true. Authenticity that "makes

sense" depends on an essentially artistic flourish if it cannot come up with incontrovertible paperwork. In the absence of a signature (and, what's more, a signature which has several more signatures to vouch for its authenticity), we rely on something more like plausibility or coherence.

In *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Lionel Trilling wrote that "the work of art is itself authentic by reason of its entire self-definition: it is understood to exist wholly by the laws of its own being, which include the right to embody painful, ignoble, or socially unacceptable subject-matters. Similarly the artist seeks his personal authenticity in his entire autonomy." This may not be how Michelangelo thought of the matter (Trilling is speaking specif-

ically of a 19th-century habit of mind), but it is, to some degree, how we now think of Michelangelo, in his isolated and heroic creativity. And as he isn't around to clarify exactly what it is to be authentically Michelangelesque, we must do the work for him. Dead people don't have the luxury of "autonomousness".

The result can be decidedly odd - the careful creation of a new being, incapable of error or even the labour of false starts. It has happened to other artists, too. In the past 90 years, we have lost more than half the Rembrandts that were in existence at the beginning of the century: out through some inconceivable carelessness on the part of curators, but because the Rembrandt Research Project has doggedly hacked away

at what it considers to be false attributions. They have relied mostly on stylistic considerations (just as Dr Brandt did with her Michelangelo), effectively removing "lesser works" from the corpus. As they proceed, Rembrandt becomes a greater and greater artist and, in some respects at least, less and less humanly interesting.

Clearly the procedure works both ways - if a work of art is elevated to the corpus, it is honour-bound to live up to its new estate. This sometimes takes diligence, as with the world's fresh scrutiny of the New York cupid. "The more one looks at it," Dr Penny said, "the more it grows on one." But would anyone have looked so hard or seen so much if that new and glamorous authenticity had never been advanced?

Charmer, charlatan, patron, genius

Diaghilev was the century's most flamboyant fixer and artistic visionary. A major new exhibition tries to get the measure of the man. By Paul Taylor

Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev (1872-1929) had a badger-stripe of white in his dark hair, giving him a look of Susan Sontag and Bride of Frankenstein. In the portraits of the great Russian impresario that you find dotted around "Diaghilev: Creator of the Ballets Russes" at the Barbican, this feature (which earned him the nickname "Chinchilla") is somewhat easier to spot than evidence of the formidable charm to which his contemporaries made ritual reference.

"He could charm a dead man to life," wrote the English showman, CB Cochran, and that can't be much of an exaggeration, given the range of Diaghilev's magnetism and persuasive powers. By the time he founded the Ballets Russes in 1911, he had already organised the 1906 exhibition of Russian art at the Paris Salon d'Automne, the 1908 concerts of Russian music (which introduced Chaliapin, Rachmaninov and Rimsky-Korsakov to Paris audiences), and treated the world to the glories of *Boris Godunov*. In the two seasons of 1909 and 1910 he had gone on - despite the curious fact that he was initially no enthusiast of the form - to make ballet the vehicle for his vision of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a synthesis of music, painting and movement in the totally integrated work of art. In *Petrushka* (1910), the dance drama about the puppet with human feelings, he had supervised the supreme example of what he was aiming for. The circle of talent with which he had surrounded himself was already such a roll-call of the rarefied that any future film version of his life would be bound to run into acute dialogue difficulties: "Could you just hold on a sec, Benois, old chap, I've got Stravinsky on the other line. Apparently, Nijinsky's throwing a wobbly. No, I said Nijinsky, not Strav. Well, bang goes brunch with Proust."

There's a caricature by Pavel Shcherbov which shows Diaghilev on a stool in homely shirt and blouse literally milking Princess Tenisheva, his *World of Art* sponsor, who is represented as a cow. To finance his projects, the impresario was continually forced to make overtures to wealthy, titled types. Diaghilev's seasons tended to be critical smashes but financial failures. *The Firebird* was no *Starlight Express*, a gleaming example of that process in reverse.

The point about the cartoon, though, is that it's a rare instance of Diaghilev, the consummate operator, depicted in activity. The vast bulk of the images here - including the famous Leon Bakst portrait of him with his old nanny in the background - give you scant inkling of the man's drive and dynamism. They recall, rather, Osbert Sitwell's marvellous description of him in *Great Morning*: "When he was preoccupied, his massive head, with a nose of the flat, not aquiline, Russian type, had something of a Velasquez dwarf's air of solemn pathos and listless fatality." But what of the theatre he masterminded? Does the energy of that come across? It would indeed be an ironic fate for productions that strove to bring the arts into a vital synthesis, if, in separating out their elements, an exhibition were to let the life leak away. The current show has tried to guard against this by employing the designer, Paul Dart, to throw a theatrical atmosphere round the exhibits. This works best in the extraordinary installation on the lower level where - in an effect that is like looking down a long, magical tunnel of fairy-tale grottoes - a succession of Bakst and Benois stage designs (to *Cleopatra*, *Petrushka*, *Scheherazade* etc) open out to each other, pulling you in to examine the relevant objects (costumes, posters, props, statuary) housed in the spaces between. With their "oriental" subject matter, exotic decor and revolutionary palette of overwhelmingly rich, sensual shades, these designs would make a stage buzz with vibrancy before a dancer stepped anywhere near it.

Compared to the drama of the designs - notably Bakst's costume-design paintings which demonstrate his phenomenal knack of presenting dress as the intoxicated extension of emotion rather than as just so much coloured fabric - the actual costumes in their glass cases seem a little faded and inert. Not that there is any music for them to come alive to, since, although these ballets boast scores by Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Rimsky-Korsakov et al, a decision has been taken that the exhibition is best perambulated in silence.

There's a puzzling omission among the costumes. "Nijinsky appeared at the Imperial Theatre in the tightest tights anyone had ever seen [in fact, an athletic support padded with handkerchiefs and little else]," remarked Stravinsky of the dancer's 1911 performance as Albrecht in *Giselle*, where he refused to appear before the audience in the discreet, Renaissance-style outfit Benois had designed. You could argue that the bandage-like substitute he insisted on sporting is one of the more pivotal



undergarments in cultural history, since it led to Nijinsky's dismissal from the Imperial Theatre and to the creation of the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev, who had hitherto merely borrowed Russian artists for his Paris seasons, now exploited the situation to found his own independent company and to bind his lover Nijinsky ever closer to him. More than a storm in a teacup, then, and I think that, assuming it hasn't been paved to his, we could have been granted a glimpse at this historic object.

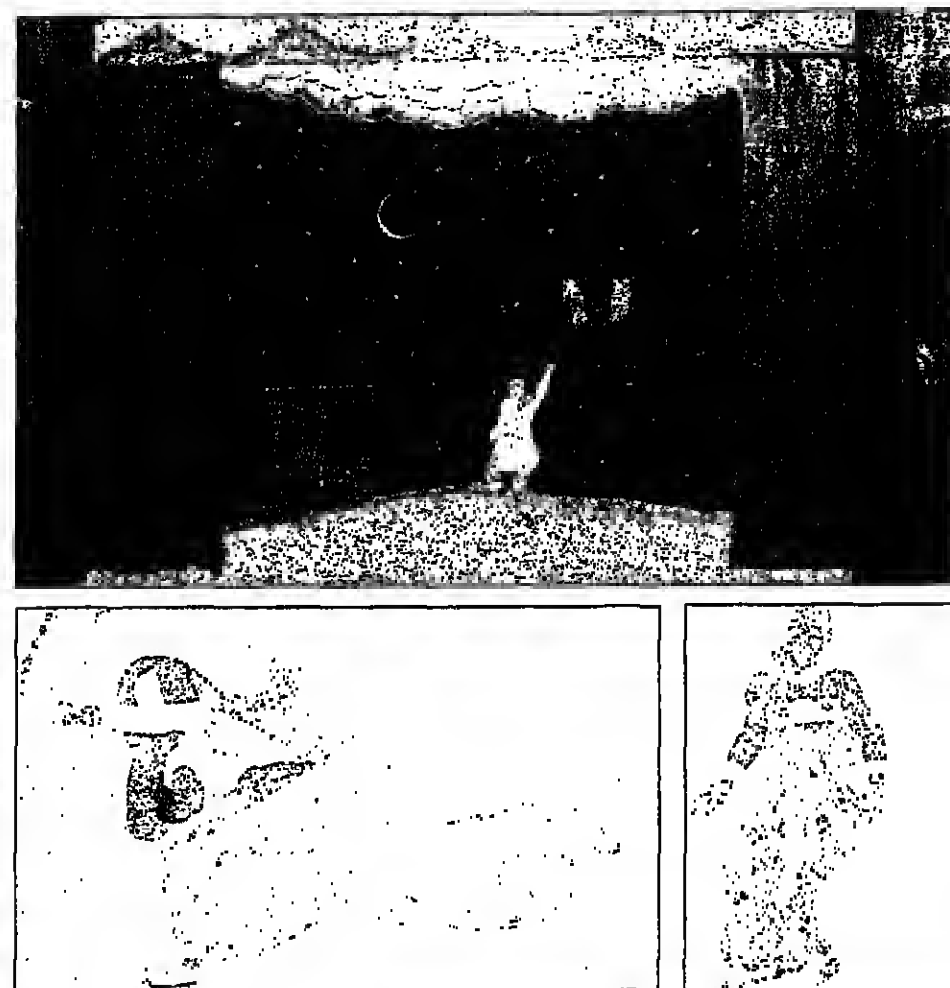
The cut-off point for the exhibition is the outbreak of the First World War, with Diaghilev and his troupe stranded away from their homeland and scattered in Europe and the US. Ahead of the impresario lay a further 15 years of achievement and the decision to look to the European avant-garde (notably the Cubism of Picasso) rather than back to Russia for design inspiration. But renewed interest in Diaghilev in his post-Communist homeland has meant that pre-Revolutionary items can now be brought over for the first time, and the exhibition is keen to emphasise the enduring Russian influences on his art up to that date.

The value of the early sections is that they establish a sense of the culture from which Diaghilev sprang, introducing you to such notable forerunners of the impresario as Savva Mamontov (1841-1918), a wealthy industrial-

ist and patron who founded an arts colony on the Abramtsevo estate, a successful ceramics workshop and a loss-making but highly esteemed private opera company in Moscow. While the scenic department of the Imperial Theatre churned out standard-issue glades, lakes and palaces, Mamontov's company saw design as a painterly challenge and an opportunity to revitalise national culture. His was an example, you feel, not wasted on Diaghilev.

It's to be hoped that when the promised exhibition of the remaining years is mounted, it will be as accommodating to the complicated legacy of Diaghilev, whose company promptly folded on his death in 1929, as this show has been to what shaped him and to the St Petersburg intellectual circles in which he made his first impact. "I am, first, a great charlatan, though with dash," he had written to his stepmother in 1895, "second, a great charmer, third, cheeky, fourth, a person with a lot of logic and few principles, and fifth, someone afflicted, it seems, with a complete absence of talent. I think I've found my true vocation: to be a patron of the arts. For that I have everything I need except the money. *Mais ça viendra...*" He could have added that, sixth, he was clairvoyant.

Diaghilev: Creator of the Ballets Russes is at the Barbican Centre, London EC2 (0171-638 8891) to 14 April



Clockwise from left: Portrait of Diaghilev with his nanny by Leon Bakst (State Russian Museum, St Petersburg); Alexandre Benois' set design for *Petrushka*, 1911 (Bolshoi Theatre Museum, Moscow); and Bakst's costume designs for the Golden Negro (right) and an Odalisque (left) in *Scheherazade*, 1910 (Private collection)

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TELEVISION

Paul Merton in... (ITV)

Jasper Rees propounds the novel theory that comedy is, in fact, the new opera

In *Dead Funny*, Terry Johnson's recent West End bit, four bores hold a wake for Benny Hill. The theory proposed by the play, and implied in the title, is that comedy cannot survive resurrection. On the principle that an old joke is any joke told more than once, Johnson derides the anorak instinct to dig up classic sketches and parade them anew. It's in accordance with this theory that modern comedy has come to be known as the new rock'n'roll, sending forth bristling new stars and exciting trend-spotting arts pages to increase its quota of column inches.

Now Paul Merton in *Galton and Simpson's...* has come along to test this theory. The project, in which Merton plays the parts originally written for Tony Hancock, proposes comedy as the new opera, with a fixed repertoire of classic libretti and arias.

Merton has already given the BBC his idiosyncratic PhD on vintage comedy, so this would appear to be the next logical step: an archaeological dig for yesteryear's laughs, with Merton as chief shoveller. He is both well and ill equipped for the task. He knows the material backwards, but sometimes he might get more laughs if he said it backwards. Despite positioning himself as a keeper of the flame, he's also television's most accomplished improv comedian. Never very good at making other people's lines his own, almost all his best work is done without a script.

In other words, his generous instincts are not in doubt, but his ability to act is. He has a measure of Hancock's uppity menace but, with a volume control that goes no lower than nine, none of his pathos. It could easily be claimed that this is irrelevant, but if comedy even by writers as brilliant as Ray Galton and Alan Simpson is to have a shelf life, it needs to erase the memory of its premiere. Because he died before the days when every programme was kept for posterity, there is a bit of case to be made for modernising Hancock. In principle, though, it looks a heretical undertaking.

The first *Half Hour* for revival was *Twelve Angry Men*, in which Merton played the chief foreman who tries to persuade the jury of a plainly guilty criminal's innocence. The script itself is still in goodish nick ("Does Magna Carta mean anything to you? Did she die in vain?"), and the professional stereotypes on the fringes have not appreciably aged in 30 years. The only regrettable sections have been inserted to give it an updating tweak. References to Rumpole and public-utility fatcats are harmless enough, but the *Old Simpson* joke was there simply for texture; an extremely limp line wouldn't have sullied the text first time round.

Dead Funny, incidentally, quotes the last lines Galton and Simpson ever wrote for Hancock, in which he means that after he's gone all he can expect is "a few daffodils in a jar". This venture will make his memory ever fonder. As far as Galton and Simpson, it makes them the butt of their own joke.

THEATRE Slaughter City, RSC Pit, London

Naomi Wallace's blood-stained account of American industrial relations offers large dollops of symbolism, but no slice of life. By Paul Taylor



Cod's co-workers, Brandon (Alexis Daniel) and Roach (Lisa Gaye Dixon), all victims of the Sausage Man

Photograph: Stuart Morris

You can't accuse Naomi Wallace of malingering in the one milieu. Her last couple of plays, for example, have transported us on Gulf War flashbacks (*In the Heart of America*) and to a boarded-up London house during the Great Plague of 1665 (the excellent *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). *Slaughter City*, now premiered in Ron Daniels's Pit production, deposits us in a US abattoir, designed to offer a symbolic microcosm of the pernicious relations between capital and labour. The set is as bloody as a butcher's apron. Carousels of realistic-looking carcasses swing by on hooks. Innards are rummaged out. Gristle is sliced from bone. These must have been testing times for any herbivores in the RSC's scenic and props department.

But though the setting of her plays may be varied, a strain of repetitiveness can now be detected. In *In the Heart of America*, the confused ghost of a Vietnamese woman searched for the murderer of her three-year-old daughter in a world where, after US action in Panama, Grenada and Operation Desert Storm, parallel post-mortems were taking place. The implication, highly tendentious, was that all American wars are, at some level, the same: a repeat of the My Lai massacre.

Slaughter City applies that formula to the history of injustice, negligence and disaster in the field of American industrial relations. Here, the perplexed figure who wanders in from the past so as to point up the debatable theme of endless recurrence is Cod (a signally intense Owen Fouere). Her mother, a turn of the century textile worker, had had to jump to her death from a fire but

managed to save Cod, still in the womb, by making a last-minute pact with the Sausage Man (Robert Langdon Lloyd).

With his grinder turning disgusting refuse into profit, this figure emblematises capital, but he evidently has supernatural powers. The price of saving the child's life is that she become his "spark", to be sent wherever he chooses for ever. He seems to revel in Cod's resistance to him, "the labourer against my system! It's glorious, it's heroic. And we have all the time in the world..." To him, it's a game he thinks he can't lose; to her, it's like a recurring nightmare as, in male disguise, she's taken to be a witness-participant in one industrial horror after another.

Slaughter City ends with her breaking the cycle and taking effective action in the here and now. You may wonder, though, whether that inspirational close compensates for the drawbacks of giving the piece a cumbersome, far-fetched and confusing mythic element that raises more doubts than it resolves. Cod's co-workers are splendidly played by Lisa Gaye Dixon, Sophie Stanton and Alexis Daniel and there is, at times, despite an over-dosing on meat metaphors, a hard-edged particularity in the writing. I'd have preferred to find out more about their lives instead of being shown the pattern of which they are allegedly part. And that pattern is simplistic. The boss (Linal Haft) has a pet which is the single last surviving snail of its kind. I bet you can't guess what happens to it and him. Well, talk about asking for it.

Barbican, London EC2. Booking: 0171-638 8891, in rep

CLASSICAL

Emerson Quartet / Barbican

They brought Bartok to a boil last year, but Beethoven fell flat. By Robert Cowan

Poised beneath a warmly coloured backdrop, the Emerson Quartet made piquant music of Beethoven's D major String Quartet, Op 18 No 3. It was a taut affair, alert to every modulation, consistently incisive and elegantly articulated. Furthermore, the Quartet's instruments enhanced the effect, though Philip Setzer's Lupot sounded rather brighter in tone than Eugene Drucker's Stradivarius. Setzer led the first half, swapping to second fiddle after the interval (ie, for the first "Razumovsky" Quartet) although if any one member warranted special praise, it was cellist David Finckel, a strong player with a full, vibrant tone beautifully sustained. Violist Lawrence Dutton was the most visibly demonstrative of the four, swaying to the rhythm of the phrase, while Drucker kept his eyes firmly on the music.

Nothing seemed left to chance, a wise decision given that tempos were generally swift, even a mite breathless. Beethoven marked his slow movement *Andante con moto*, meaning "don't dawdle". The Emersons took due note, but switching to their new Deutsche Grammophon CD of the piece – recorded two years ago but only just released – revealed a level of repose lacking from Wednesday's performance. The Scherzo, too, seemed rushed and, again, comparisons with the recording suggest impatience on stage. The F major Quartet is Op 18's strongest component and features an anguished slow movement that was inspired, we're told, by the burial-vault scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. It's marked "*Adagio affettuoso e appassionato*" but although the Emersons brought great visceral excitement to the music's more urgent episodes, there was no sense of danger, no necessary risk-taking: it was all too far from the edge. Likewise in the first "Razumovsky" Quartet where the hilarious Scherzo spins a dazzling sequence of musical one-liners and the Adagio cries its soulful confession. On one occasion, Drucker almost broke the barriers of propriety (that was during the latter half of the slow movement), but elsewhere I sensed the same predictable story of earnestness, accuracy and applied charm.

It seems palpably unfair to criticise playing that, if taken at face value, has so much to offer – certainly in terms of polish, virtuosity and finesse. The Emersons are fine musicians: they have impeccable taste; they phrase intelligently and they make a beautiful sound. And yet, somehow, their Beethoven never caught fire, at least not on this first lap of their complete cycle. I could hardly believe that here was the group that brought Bartok to the boil last summer (OEH). Perhaps Beethoven poses them a more personal challenge: perhaps they need to cast off the formalities of stage performance and ease into private dialogue where, away from the public's gaze, they can "do the Beethovenian thing" without any inhibitions. But, of course, it's early days yet and they could quite easily loosen up for the rest of the series.

DICKIE FANTASTIC on the schmooze

'I'll tell you the best thing about Victorian satire – no subtlety'

"I'll tell you," says Samuel Alderton, "what isn't funny." "What?" I ask. "Paul Merton," he replies. "He's not funny. Neither is Monty Python, the Young Ones, and those so-called alternative comedians like Ben Elton and that bloody stupid Alexei Sayle. They aren't funny. It's all 'Thatcher' this, shout shout shout." "Not at all funny, no no," adds Samuel's wife, Melissa. "Shouting isn't funny. Yelling isn't amusing." "Out of all the contemporary comedians," concludes Samuel, sternly, "I'll tell you who the only funny ones are." "Who?" I ask. "The Goons," replies Samuel. "Now that's funny." "Yes," laughs Melissa.

"Ying Tung Yiddle I Po... Ha ha ha!" Samuel and Melissa Alderton are the founder members of LOVS – "Lovers of Victorian Satire" – a small group of like-minded people dedicated to bringing the joys of this marvellous, marvellous, marvellous old art back to the people. They perform their favourite songs and sketches at schools and festivals, and organise evenings in which they all sit around and laugh and shake their heads in wonder. Which is exactly what 25 of us are doing now, at a conference room at the Holiday Inn in King's Cross. "Listen to this," he says. "Listen to this... it's devastating."

He puts on a very old 78 recording of a man performing a song entitled "In Trinity Church I Met Me Doom", and we sit in silent awe. "In Trinity Church I Met Me Doom..." sings the man. "A Ra Ra A Ra A De De De De." "The missus hit me with a broom" sings the man. "A Ra Ra A Ra A De De De De," says Samuel and Melissa in unison. "You see," says Samuel. "They didn't need to shout. They didn't need nastiness." "He's been a little nasty to his wife," I offer tentatively. "It's a joke," bellows Samuel. "It's all clean fun. Bloody political correctness. It's not like he's hitting her with a broom, is it now?"

"It's not wife battery," agrees Melissa. "I'll tell you the best thing about Victorian satire." "What?" I ask. "No subtlety," she replies. "No nuances. Nowadays it's all nuances and sub-texts. Bloody ridiculous. What are they? Funnymen, or university lecturers?" The high-spot of tonight's party is listening to Samuel and Melissa performing a sketch entitled "The Gen-darme". "Excuse me," says Samuel. "Oui?" says Melissa. "My lady wife," says Samuel, "fell out of bed last night." "Ooh la la!" says Melissa. "She's so fat," concludes Samuel, "that she rolled herself back to sleep." There is a huge laugh.

"That joke can be traced back to 1895," whispers an aged man called Bob. "One hundred whole years ago." He gives his wife a wink. "Before even you were born. You see, our Victorian forefathers knew how to let their hair down, contrary to popular belief." "I've got a question," I say. "Why is he telling a policeman that his wife fell out of bed? You'd be done for wasting police time if you did that now. You'd probably be locked in a padded cell." "Well, that's the difference isn't it?" says Melissa. "The policemen were a lot more friendly in those days. Life was a lot more friendly." "I'll tell you who I blame for the

death of Victorian satire," says Samuel later, as the night reaches its end. "Who?" I ask. "Thatcher," says Samuel. "You sound like an alternative comedian," I say. "No, seriously," says Samuel. "When Thatcher said we should all get back to Victorian values, she was talking about discipline and silence during meals. That sort of thing. It gave the Victorians such a bad name. You know what Victorian values really were?" "What?" I say. "Having a bloody good laugh," says Samuel. "That's what. Having a bloody good time."

KEY	THE PLAY	THE FILM	THE TELEVISION SERIES	THE GIG
EXCELLENT	FLESH FLY	HEAT	OUR FRIENDS IN THE NORTH	BIORK
GOOD	overview	critical view	on view	our view
OR	Ben Jonson's classic comedy, a savage satire on human greed and sickness, in Trevor Lloyd's new adaptation for Graeae, Europe's leading theatre company for disabled actors.	Michael "The Last of the Mohicans" Martin goes back to the streets (LA) with a couple of obsessive Al Pacino as a smart, lonely cop and Robert De Niro as the leader of a gang of thieves.	Peter Flannery's nine-part saga of political and emotional corruption follows four friends over three decades from 1964, in other words, a dramatized biography of post-war Britain.	Chuzzlewit? James, looks like it will pay off. The Icelandic superstar played a four-night tour with an impeccably chic support act, the British String Quartet playing Shostakovich and friends.
POOR	Paul Taylor was impressed. "A comic zest that is free from either sentimentality or brooding bitterness. An evening you won't forget in a hurry." "Proof, if any were needed that [disability] can be deployed with imagination and style," observed Time Out. "This is theatre at its most compelling. A classic has been made to speak with startling urgency and freshness," exclaimed the Telegraph.	Adam Mars-Jones was lukewarm. Even the action set-piece "doesn't make the pulse race." "Our old Hollywood friend, Zen Buddhism... how little human drama there is," groaned the Financial Times. "Heat applies the heat," approved the Times. "The most spectacular B-movie ever made," proclaimed the Guardian. "The best American film of the '90s. That good," declared Time Out.	on Sunday. "Excellent," declared the Sunday Times. 9pm BBC2, Mondays.	Nick Coleman described it as "brilliant" and was tremendously impressed by her range and "startling passion." "What the show missed in traditional rabble-raising dynamics was more than made up for by Biork's inventive and energetic style of projection," applauded the Times. "Her reservoirs of imagination set her apart from every other star," marvelled the Guardian. It's over, but the CDs remain.
DEADLY	Oval House, London (0181-582 7680) to Sun. Tues. Weds. West Yorkshire Playhouse (0113 244 2111); Thurs-Sat, Warwick Arts Centre (01203 524524).	On general release, cert 15.	Commissioned 14 years ago and twice cancelled, this 22m gamble, directed by Peter Martin.	More a ritual than a pop concert, and why not?

JPM 10.15.20

This is how it used to work: you wrote a book, people read it, it made you a star. Not any more. Writers are making their reputations before they've published a word

By Jason Cowley

Can a publisher predetermine the critical reception of a book? This March, you are sure to hear, sooner or later, of *The Debt to Pleasure*, by John Lanchester, easily the most hyped novelist to debut since Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Lanchester's book has been pre-emptively applauded as "the publishing event of the year" and as "the most brilliant and original novel to appear by an English author for a decade" – not by the critics, but by his own publishers, Picador. In case that is too muted for the book-reading audience, Picador has also predicted that the novel will take its place alongside the "great international best-sellers: Patrick Suskind's *Perfume*, Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* and Peter Hoeg's *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*."

Structured as a kind of elaborate cookbook, *The Debt to Pleasure* is narrated by the fastidiously fatigued Tarquin Winot, gourmet, aesthete and murderer. There is a sumptuousness and Nabokovian hauteur about the prose, but also an oppressive knowledge of tone that doesn't always ring true. Still, the hype appears to be working. *The Debt* has been sold to publishers in Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, Sweden and Brazil. Lanchester has become a rich man without selling a single copy of his book. And one could happily write off its success as no more than cunning marketing were it not for a strange phenomenon.

At the Frankfurt Book Fair last October, Picador held a party at which Lanchester congenially received his admirers – Japanese translators, Italian scouts, Polish scribblers. After the event, the fair resounded to the sound of his name – but people seemed to be speaking about the book exclusively in the terms prescribed by the publisher. Comparisons were being made – as though they were original thoughts – with Donna Tartt and Patrick Suskind. More than once I heard the book described as "the publishing event of the year". And back in England, the same phrase began to appear in previews of spring fiction.

What it seems Picador has done with its cleverly calculated campaign is nothing less than try to control the terms on which the novel will be assessed, to pre-arrange future interpretations of one of its titles. It's quite

a concept, the publisher-as-critic: very postmodernist.

Hype in the mid-Nineties is a matter of pre-arranging fame. In 1812, Lord Byron could write, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous," after the first two cantos of his sprawling narrative poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" were received with rapture on their publication. In 1996, publishers are so skilled and assiduous at creating an aura of pre-publication expectation that writers can achieve a kind of fame long before they have published anything at all.

Jon Riley, who taught *The Debt* for Picador, concedes that there's a danger that the hype may, in the end, work against it. "I think people are rightly suspicious of publishers' pre-publication celebrations," he says. "But you only get the chance every so often in your life to make the claims we've been making about John's novel and get away with it. I'm encouraged that other people are using the same kind of language as we are about the book, even though they don't have a vested interest in it."

Tim Adams, literary editor of a national Sunday paper, says, "Although I feel we are always going to be susceptible to hype, I am suspicious when a publisher starts to talk up a book. They are under pressure to produce one new sensation each season, and, of course, you can't expect to do that. Publishers also seem obsessed with finding new young writers – the next big thing – when I think they would be better served investing in some of their more established names." What does he think of the Lanchester? "Oh, it fully justifies the hype: it's an exceptional novel."

Another way in which publishers can guarantee interest in a first novel is to pay a lot of money for it. Evelyn Waugh gave this advice to an aspiring writer: "Reviews matter very little in the case of a novel. The important thing is to make people talk about it. You can do this by forcing your way into the newspapers in some other way." Two young writers who have broken free from the ghetto of the book pages are Martin Bedford and James Hawes, both of whom made front page news when their novels *Acts of Revision* and *A White Merc* with *Fins* were bought by Transworld and Cape for large bucks. A lecturer at Swansea University,

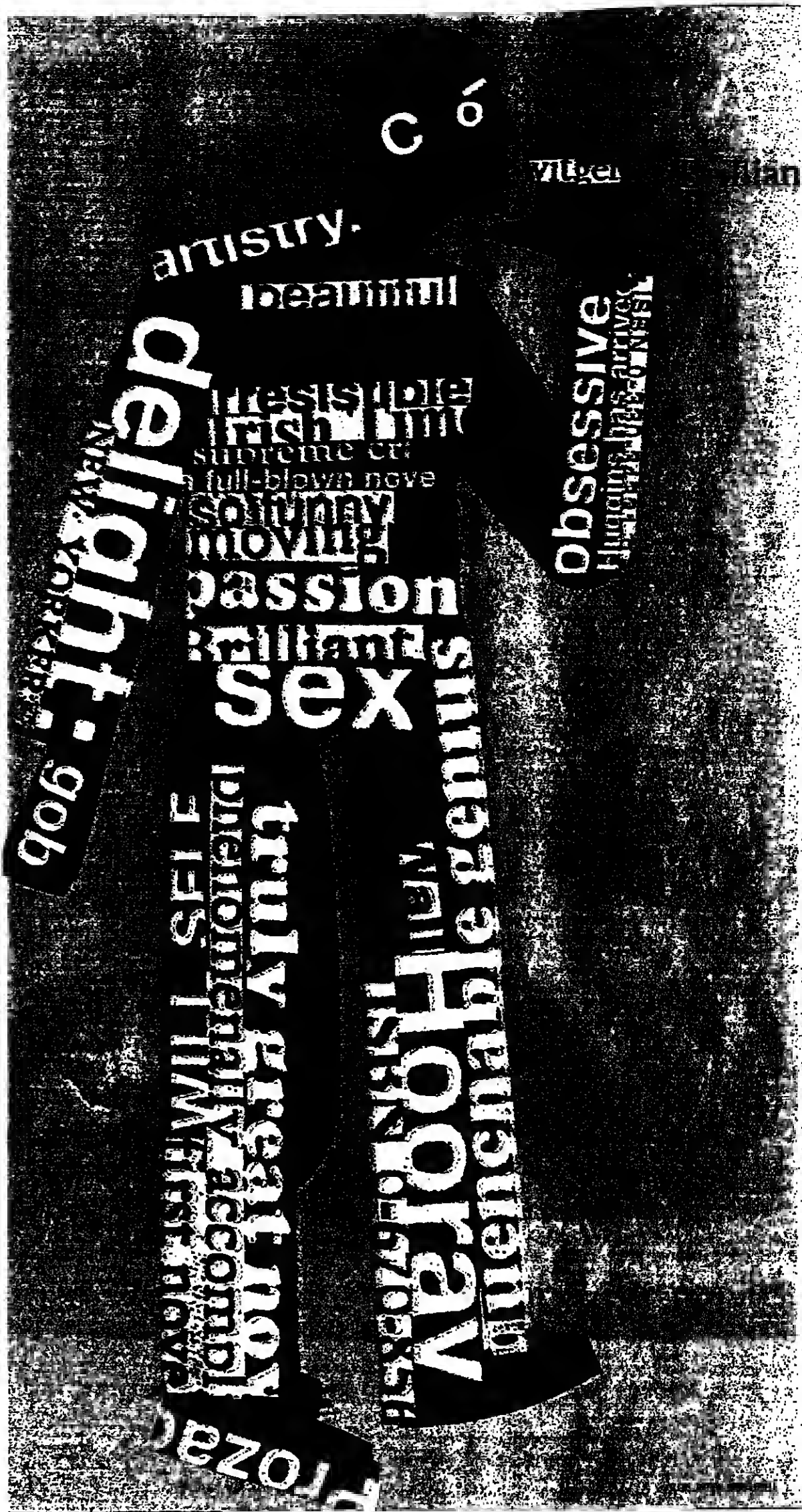
Hawes has written an excitable, hectic debut about an indolent graduate who dreams of robbing an establishment he calls "Michael Winner's Private Bank". As with the Lanchester, the book is receiving the full treatment. "I photographed *White Merc* 25 times as soon as I'd bought the book," says publisher Dan Franklin, "because you have to get everybody in the office saying it's great, even editors from other divisions."

The reason for this excitement is mostly money. "If a publisher has paid a lot for a book, then he is going to promote it," says the agent and publisher Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson. "It's so difficult to get anyone interested in a first novel that, when you publish one you believe in, you must try to get everyone behind you. If you continually tell your sales and marketing departments that you've bought a masterpiece, they eventually believe you."

Ursula MacKenzie, publishing director of Transworld, points out that the only way to create interest and expectation in novels for which the promotional budget is small is to decorate the jacket with encomia. Among the most vigorously puffed debuts of the moment are Catherine Fox's *Angels and Men*, over which fellow Penguin authors Barbara Trapido and Pat Barker expressed great enthusiasm; and David Huggins's *The Big Axis*, on whose jacket the names of Will Self, Stephen Frears and Stephen Fry are daubed like slogans. That Self and Fry are also among the most prolific puffery in town may not diminish the force of their recommendations.

MacKenzie says: "We often send out our first novels to writers and celebrities to see if we can get some good quotes. Sometimes this is the only way you can help a first novelist. We did this with Kate Atkinson's [Whitbread-winning] *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, for which we were lucky enough to get a fabulous quote from Margaret Forster which we put on the front of the proof. We were also lucky that Kate's novel has a breadth of appeal; I don't think you can say the same about the Lanchester."

As for Lanchester himself, he is acutely conscious of the burden of expectation that's been placed on him. "It's like I've been dragged slowly up to the top of a roller coaster," he told the *Booker* in a recent interview, "and now I'm about to be let go..."



Old Nick and the spin doctors

Was the Devil the child of anti-Jewish propaganda? Jan Morris raises an agnostic eyebrow

If you feel like a few hours by the fire reading interesting theological speculations in the company of a learned, articulate, sometimes repetitive but never boring American academic, this may well be the book for you. If, on the other hand, you are pining for fresh insights into the roots and loyalties of evil, skip it. Like most theologians, of all religions, Professor Pagels is either unable or reluctant to differentiate between the real and the figurative, so that she leaves us at the end little the wiser about what or who Satan was originally supposed to be – being, image, fact or symbol?

I write not just as an out-and-out agnostic but as a despiser of theological and philosophical gobbledegook. Take this banal truism, so dear to Pagels that she prints it twice: "The worldview of most peoples consists essentially of two pairs of binary oppositions: human/not human and we/they". Big deal. It would be an odd world view indeed that confused one's grandmother with a centipede and could not tell the difference between ourselves and everyone else; but the thought chimes happily with the currently fashionable concept of "The Other".

Pagels's catchy title is misleading. *The Origin of Satan* is based upon learned papers she has written for scholarly

journals on varied theological subjects, now revised to make them "more generally accessible" for you and me, and it returns only intermittently, when its author remembers (or perhaps when its editor reminds her), to the explicit theme of Satanic origins. It concerns itself almost entirely with the Judaeo-Christian tradition, virtually ignoring people like the Zoroastrians (from whose alarming demon Ahriman, the encyclopaedia tells me, the Jews probably got the idea of Satan, during their Babylonian exile), let alone the very peculiar Yezidis of Kurdistan, who deny the existence of evil altogether and believe that Satan is the chief of God's angels.

No, it is the demonization of "The Other" that Pagels is writing about, and in particular the deliberate and fateful demonization, in the first centuries of Christianity, of the mass of the Jewish people – mostly by other Jews. Successive New Testament gospels, she demonstrates, while naturally giving a cosmological meaning to the whole story of Christ's execution, cast the Jewish people more and more in the role of devils – children of Satan. Wondering whether the evangelists meant this literally is about like wondering whether the Archbishop of Canterbury really believes in virgin birth,

The Origin of Satan
by Elaine Pagels
Allen Lane, £20

but despite the book's title that is not the point. The point is that Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, writing in dangerous times of Roman domination, were anxious to put the blame for Christ's death upon the Jews rather than upon the Romans, and thus established a tradition and a reproach which perhaps did not end with the Holocaust.

This part of the book is entirely fascinating and, to an innocent like me, horrifying too. Could it really be that Christ's evangelists, the ultimate spokesmen of Love and Truth, were hardly more than spin-doctors? Did they make up the entire episode of Christ's appearance before the Sanhedrin? Was Christ's dialogue with Pontius Pilate purely fictional? Was Pilate himself, for whom most of us probably have some sneaking sympathy, really no more than a bully and a bigot? Worst of all, could Matthew simply have invented the terrible cry of the Jewish crowd – "His blood be on us, and on our children" – which has reverberated so appallingly down the centuries?

The later the gospel, it seems, the more distorted,



The devil you know: Hell, as seen by Poi de Limbourg in 1410

and the more vicious towards the Jews at large, until in the last one (John's), Jesus himself allegedly pronounces the anathema: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning... he is a liar, and the father of it". In the end the Jews who oppose Christ appear to be no longer a mere ethnic or religious group, but a kind of communal symbol of evil. "Deploying the devil", Pagels calls this disreputable progression, momentarily justifying the title of her book.

Later, irrelevance seems to creep in. Pagels drifts off into miscellaneous reportage about early Christianity: persecution under the Romans, Gnostic gospels and the growth of Christian heresies,

none of which tell us much more about the Satanic idea. We are left to surmise whether the early Christians – Jesus himself, for that matter – believed in Satan as an actual being, or whether the Devil was, for most of them, no more than a sort of frightful logo. Did the evangelists wish us to suppose that Jesus encountered Satan bodily in the desert, and resisted his temptations face to face, or were they talking allegorically? Was Judas Iscariot an actual embodiment of Satan, flesh and blood, in the way that Jesus was God made man? Pagels never tackles this transcendental aspect of her subject. Her approach remains sternly textual and academic.

But that's theology for you, I suppose. The events discussed in this book have had consequences almost unimaginably important. Much of human history has turned upon the death of Christ: millions of people have suffered from the evident manipulations of the gospels. It must be strange to spend a lifetime exploring the historical minutiae of it all, while aware of the almost farcical possibility at the centre of it: namely the fifty-fifty chance that there never has been a God at all, or a Devil either! How much easier the world would have been, if an agnostic had created it.



Reality bites: he's black, he's communist, and he's the mayor of Eugene Terreblanche's town. Robert Block on the Afrikaners' nightmare

But is it art? Blake Morrison on pornography

Plus: Mark Lamarr – big softie at heart; and Britain's coffee craze

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

A passion for lying



Ford Madox Ford was a flabby giant and an unlikely womaniser with 'a profound contempt for facts'. So what's his biographer to do? Peter Parker investigates

Picture: Mansell Collection

Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life Vol 1: The World Before the War by Max Saunders, Oxford, £35

Ford Madox Ford wrote over 70 books, but few of them are much read or even remembered today. Posterity has agreed with him in judging his masterly little tragedy, *The Good Soldier*, and his quartet of novels about the First World War, *Parade's End*, his best work. The volumes of poetry, biography, criticism and topography have long since been cast into one of literary history's many oubliettes.

In this Ford has suffered the fate of many prolific Edwardian figures but the decline in his own literary fortunes was exacerbated by the character he presented in his memoirs. His reputation for boastfulness and mendacity is matched in this century only by that of Roy Campbell, and the standard biography (by Arthur Mizener, 1972) is as much a work of censure as of celebration. Max Saunders's vast critical biography – almost 500 closely printed pages, followed by a further 100 pages of notes – is in part a work of restitution.

Despite its length, the present volume deals only with Ford's life up until 1916, which leaves a great deal to come, not least *Parade's End*, his editorship of the *Transatlantic Review*, and his relationships with Stella Bowen, Janice Biala and Jean Rhys, whose novel *Quartet* – a distinctly Fordian tragedy of amatory entanglements and moral corruption – is based upon her involvement with him.

What we have here, therefore, is the story of Ford's dual inheritance (German intellectual on his father's side, English Pre-Raphaelite on his mother's), his literary apprenticeship, his contentious collaborations with Joseph Conrad, his editorship of the *English Review*, his unhappy marriage and the subsequent relationship with Violet Hunt, his war service and the writing and publication of *The Good Soldier*.

Saunders's excellent introduction is a thought-provoking meditation upon literary biography in general and its particular application to Ford, whose mysterious love life (no one actually knows whether he married Violet Hunt), unreliability as an autobiographer, and complex "literary personality" make

him as slippery as a trout. "My aims," Saunders writes, "are to wonder at the kind of man Ford is as a writer; to ask how he became that writer; to investigate what happened while he was writing, as well as while he was not; to consider the implications for biography of Janice Biala's comment that 'His true private life and the one far more difficult to write... is his inner life, the one that produced the books, not the gossip'; and to attempt something like a composite portrait of Ford as revealed in his books."

This ambition is largely realised, but those who know nothing of Ford's eventual "outer" life may have problems following its erratic course which, like that of a will-o'-the-wisp, flickers intermittently among the dense thickets of critical discourse.

According to Wyndham Lewis, Ford "was a flabby lemon and pink giant who hung his mouth open as though he were an animal at the Zoo inviting buns", but he seems to have had no difficulty attracting women, and married his first (and only legal) wife after spiriting her away from her obstructive parents.

There followed numerous affairs (probably including one with his sister-in-law); a succession of more or less scandalous partnerships; protracted, bitter and very public divorce proceedings; a brief spell in prison; persistent money problems; and frequent wrangles and fallings-out with friends and colleagues. Saunders demonstrates that Ford's work not only reflects this life but occasionally prefigures it: he would dream up the plot of a story or novel and then follow a similar course in his life.

Wilde's assertion that "life imitates art" could equally be applied to Ford, who was impatient of the distinctions between real and poetic truth. "I don't really deal in facts" he wrote in his first volume of memoirs, "I have for facts a most profound contempt." Saunders might have taken as his epigraph a passage from Wilde's essay "The Decay of Lying": "Lying and poetry are arts – arts, as Plato saw, not unconnected with each other and they require the most careful study, the most disinterested devotion."

It is the suspicion that Ford's devotion to lying was anything but disinterested that has caused his detractors to vilify him, but Saunders investigates the most contentious of Ford's anecdotes and concludes that ambiguity (one aspect of his "duality") explains much, while his favoured literary mode of "impressionism" leads naturally and fruitfully to a different sort of truth.

This is fine when one is dealing with literary memoirs, but not very helpful when one is trying to establish important facts. After rehearsing all the possible versions of the as yet undivorced Ford's "marriage" to Hunt, Saunders is obliged to admit that "it is all an impressionist haze". Following his subject's lead, however, he observes (quite rightly) that "The evidence can't tell us conclusively what happened but it does say much about what Ford, Hunt, and their friends and acquaintances thought about it."

Biographies that champion their subjects are always heartening, but Saunders's detailed rebuttal of former theories is such that the reader frequently feels forgotten. Reading the book is rather like watching a particularly complicated trial from the public gallery, as Saunders painstakingly sifts the evidence and picks apart his predecessors' case for the prosecution. Furthermore, his laudable advocacy occasionally leads him to discard subtleties when a more obvious explanation is staring him in the face. For instance, of *The Soul of London* (1905) he writes: "the very term 'soul' – psyche – conveys a disconcertingly psychological approach to its subject". It is unlikely to have disconcerted anyone who had lived through the 1890s, a period that was almost literally soulful, and the titles of the other books in this trilogy, *The Heart of the Country* and *The Spirit of the People*, make *The Soul of London* sound almost like a cliché.

That said, where others have found fault, Saunders has discovered riches. The main achievement of his biography is to show the fascinating and productive interplay between fact and fiction, life and art, autobiography and impressionism.

All you need to know about the books you meant to read

by Gavin Griffiths



This week:

THE GOOD SOLDIER (1915) by Ford Madox Ford

Plot: "This is the saddest story I have ever heard," begins John Powell, the rich but dim American narrator. There are three other main characters: Florence, his wife, apparently an invalid incapable of sexual intercourse; Leonora Ashburnham, a Catholic of strong principles and astringent personality; and her husband Edward, ostensibly a gentleman of the old school cursed with a dicky heart. The quartet have muted fun for nine years on their regular holidays in Nauheim, a German spa town for the physically indisposed. Then, in 1913, the Ashburnhams bring with them their ward Nancy Rufford, and, inexplicably, Florence kills herself. Gradually, Dowell learns the truth: for nine years Florence, in the pink of health, has been enjoying an affair with Edward. Leonora has been monitoring his extramarital engagements from their inception. Florence kills herself because she realises Edward is getting steamed up about Nancy, who has just emerged from a convent education. Edward, appalled by his latest depravity, commits suicide. Nancy goes mad and Dowell nurses her, just as he nursed Florence. Leonora remarries and emerges triumphant.

Theme: "You may live with another for years and years in a condition of the closest daily intimacy and never know what goes on in your companion." Layer by layer, Ford reveals the mysteriousness of other people; individuals are frenetically driven by loneliness and lust but strive to appear buttoned-up and well-mannered. The "real" world dissolves into a series of peculiarly angled points of view.

Style: The story creeps out crabwise. Dowell changes his mind, tinkers with events, re-adjusts the reader's judgement. Ford invigorates his narrator's clichés with the injection of melodrama; the polished flatness of the prose mirrors exactly Dowell's sophisticated naivety.

Chief strengths: The tone is inextricably both pathetic and funny. Dowell's plight should evoke sympathy; but his baroque obtuseness and lack of self-reflection transform him into a clownish cuckold. Ford also destabilises the notion of character: Edward Ashburnham is an uptight gentleman farmer beloved by tenants and a potential child molester. Uncomfortable for him and the reader.

Chief weakness: Ford's compulsion to gild the lily in several coats of emulsion diminishes some of the final impact: only *Hamlet* has so many casually violent deaths.

What they thought of it then: 1915 was not an auspicious year for experimental fiction. Conrad, Ford's old chum, remarked with unhelpful elusiveness: "the whole vision of the subject is perfectly amazing".

What we think of it now: Too clever. "Ford is obstructed less by his defects than by the effectiveness of total ability" (V.S. Pritchett). Damned as "a minor masterpiece".

Responsible for: Graham Greene's homage, the equally underrated *The End of the Affair*.

Walking on eggshells

Sue Arnold's endearingly frank memoirs go beyond the personal. By Christina Hardyment

It wasn't until 1985, when Sue Arnold was in her mid-forties, that she plucked up the courage to explore the connections provided by her two Burmese grandmothers. The search for roots is as irrational and irresistible as salmon swimming thousands of miles to find the stream in which they were spawned. The trouble is that what is fascinating for the family genealogist may be of scant interest to the rest of us.

Those who go public with their family histories tend to be the famous (remember Germaine Greer's quest for the truth about her father, *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You*) or writers who feel that their origins seem to offer reflections of wider moment than the personal. The weakness of Arnold's book is that for too long we place her in the first category, though jibbing a little at the idea that a mere columnist should assume she is interesting

enough for us to want to read about her embarrassment at looking less than Anglo-Saxon, her ancient uncles in Dawlish and her mother's ill-fated attempts to keep her end up among the suburban snobs of North London.

But at least she is laudably unpretentious, even self-mocking. And Burma (though Arnold likes to fight the fact) has always had a galaxy of glamorous associations – General Slim, Neville Shute, Elephant Bill. So we bear with her, enjoying the swift and skilful pen portraits of newly discovered relations, the adventure of her mother's trek across Burma as a refugee (straight out of *A Town Like Alice*), increasingly sympathetic to the plight of the mixed-race child.

Being turned away from Fifties boarding houses with "colour bars" and having your five-year-old knees lashed with nettles was bad enough, but to have Sir

A Burmese Legacy: Rediscovering My Family by Sue Arnold Hodder, £17.99

Adrian Boulton complaining to the editor of the *Observer* in the Seventies about "wops" being sent to interview him must have been deeply humiliating.

Our patience is rewarded. For the book's strength is that, as Arnold gets into her stride, we realise that she is saying something very important indeed about the attitude we should be taking towards a country that deeply affected the lives of thousands of families in Britain (27,000 Allied soldiers died in the Burma campaign) and which is today balanced on a knife-edge between dictatorship and democracy.

Myanmar, as Burma is now called, is all set to be the latest of the glamorous far-away places lauded in holiday brochures – picturesque pagodas, the road to Mandalay, the Irrawaddy river. But it is a wolf in sheep's clothing, governed by a military dictatorship which is exporting teak and rubies hand over fist for private gain, and which has even sold native fishing rights to neighbouring countries. The tourist trails are hedged about with security guards; free speech is ill-advised. On her last visit, Arnold found her cousins suddenly numb; letters and presents went astray.

The change of name is a ruthless piece of public relations legwork: the generals seem to think that the floods of tourists ripe for fleecing won't realise that this is the country in which university students were crushed in 1988 considerably more brutally than the Chinese students of



Arnold: laudably unpretentious

Tiananmen Square, and in which Noble Peace prizewinner Aung San Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy party won a landslide victory in 1990, was placed under house arrest for five years.

Even now, theoretically free, Suu Kyi and her supporters are walking on eggshells. Many have been murdered, but many more remain. "There are too many people behind us for us to fail," said one of Arnold's cousins, elected as an NLD MP in 1990. Free speech may have temporarily

crushed in Burma but international protests and the big stick of economic sanctions have made it necessary for the military government to do at least the trappings of democracy in order to board the gravy train of international trade.

The NLD's survival depends on the impetus towards open government which has been effected by economic pressure and liberal world opinion. In this context, Arnold's endearingly frank fragment of autobiography could prove invaluable.

Boneless frogs and spicy porcupines

Christopher Hirst samples the "most offensive sausage in the world"

Often the most interesting cookbooks are not the most practical. This is arguably true of the works of Elizabeth David and is certainly the case with Marinetti's *Futurist Cookbook*, which advocated luridly-dyed dishes garnished with a sprinkling of eggs and gears. While far from being totally impractical, *The Decadent Cookbook* fits into this category. (Not that Marinetti would have approved of it, even though one of his dishes is included. A vehement enemy of decadence, he damned spaghetti and other soft foods for their corrupting influence on the Italian character.)

Lucan and Gray, whose fruity monikers may strike some as being suspiciously

apt, have concocted a fabulous and shocking assemblage. They begin with the Roman recipes of Apicius: roast dormice in boneyard, rather more feasibly, squid stuffed with calves brains. (Any left-over brains can be mixed with rose-hips and custard for pudding.) Skipping a millennium, the authors move on to Antonio Ghislieri, otherwise known as the Grand Inquisitor of the Counter Reformation. Considering his torturous trade, you might expect that the selection from his kitchen would include rack of lamb and whipped cream. Instead there is boneless frog soup, spitted bear (minus the head) and spicy porcupine.

The rest of the book adopts a thematic approach. The

The Decadent Cookbook by Medlar Lucan & Durian Gray Dedalus, £8.99

authors first turn their attention to the subject of blood. Their sanguinary suggestions include Swedish black blood soup, several versions of *boudin noir* and a crimson tart made with blood oranges. The sombre topic of death inspires a unexpectedly vicious selection of dishes, ranging from gravadlax (literally "grave" or "buried" salmon) to the delightful Victorian offering "Soles in Coffins" (fish and lobster lurking inside

a hollowed-out baked potato). In a section of unusual meats, it comes as little surprise that a recipe for "Manila Hot Dog" is just that ("chop off head, paws and tail"). *Eutrope à la Bordelaise* turns out to be Rat in a Shallot Sauce. The authors take a distinctly unsentimental approach to endangered species, giving recipes for the "fewer than a dozen" surviving Japanese Ibis, the Parrot Owl of New Zealand ("hunted to the point where it is almost extinct, so presumably it is rather tasty") and the Tasmanian Wolf, which has entirely disappeared apart from an occasional paw-print and therefore "provides the best candidate for that coveted 'last of the species' dish."

Perhaps the book's high point is the chapter on sausages, which includes the Swiss blue sausage (its singular appearance is explained by a 1903 ordinance of the Geneva Council which declared "that all sausages made with horsemeat should be dyed blue"), a medieval porpoise sausage and a black bear sausage. Some decadent hangers with a more conventionally porcine filling are *Fresswurst* (containing pig's head and salted pork rind, it is described as "probably the most offensive sausage in the world") and a southern Italian monstrosity called *La Indua*. Demanding 70lbs of "lowest quality pig meat" and 10lbs of hot red peppers, this dish is "renowned for its capacity to

scour the arteries, purge the intestines and exhilarate the sexual organs".

Lucan and Gray have bolstered their arcane excavations with a selection of appropriately saucy literary passages "to be read aloud during dinner". It comes as a revelation that decadents, often presumed to be tremulous, Firbankian types, seem to possess such ferociously robust and apparently limitless appetites.

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Street incredibility

It's the fag-end of the City boom. It's a Yank in London. It's a castle in Cricklewood. By Douglas Kennedy

Scott Marshall is a man with a phobia about his oesophagus. He doesn't trust it. It plays tricks on him. It wants him dead. You see, Mr Marshall has a problem when it comes to ingesting food. It tends to lodge in that alimentary canal between the pharynx and the stomach, threatening to asphyxiate him. Were he a sexual fetishist (of the lack of oxygen = heightened orgasm school of perversion), he would no doubt consider his constricted gullet something of a physiological bonus. But as he is a management consultant in the City, he simply regards it as a dangerous nuisance – and he recently suffered a moment of existential crisis while crossing Blackfriars Bridge and chomping on a Mars Bar.

However, it's not just his oesophagus which is constricting Mr Marshall. His entire life is currently throttling him – he is having a bad attack of "dem thirtysomething blues". On the surface, his existence looks as shiny and enviable as some testosterone-charged sports coupe. Of course, behind the lustreous surface lurks a less glittery underside. It is 1990, the venal glory days of the City are well and truly dead, and Scott – like every other financial whizzkid – is wondering when the downsizing axe is going to fall on his neck. His private life is a jumbled mess. He has a dying father, a psychotic girlfriend, a dubious management consultancy with a very dubious fourth division football club, and an all-enveloping sense of cultural displacement.

For Scott Marshall – the narrator of D.J. Taylor's *English Settlement* – is an American in London (albeit

English Settlement
by D. J. Taylor
Chatto, £17.99

one with an expatriate English mother who hasn't set foot on this island in years). And, like all expatriates, he suffers from a bad case of Mid-Atlanticism – of feeling precariously balanced between two cultures.

Mr Marshall also has another major predicament on his hands: he is the first American I've ever encountered in fiction who sounds like a supercilious by-product of the English public school system. Or, to be a little more blunt about it, he doesn't sound American at all. My credibility meter immediately entered the red zone when I encountered passages like this:

"My father was not altogether a subtle man, but in the matter of England he displayed a rare and wholly efficacious delicacy. Saturated in England and Englishness, albeit of a momentarily specialized sort, we questioned the incidental detail of this grand obsession rather than its wider architecture".

David Mamet beware – when it comes to awesomely accurate renderings of American patois, this Taylor guy is the momentarily specialised business. And note the street-smart idiom he employs when describing Scott's arrival at his place of business: "Reaching reception with its clutch of toothy, well-groomed traffic, I flick my KLS pass at a seneschal and wait by unimpeded".

Riveting. Worby of James Ellroy. And, of course, when I was doing Latin during my New York schooldays, we

were taught to greet all Central Park West doormen with the salutation: *Salve, seneschal!* (a seneschal for those of you who didn't benefit from a Yankee education, being "the steward or major domo of a medieval great house").

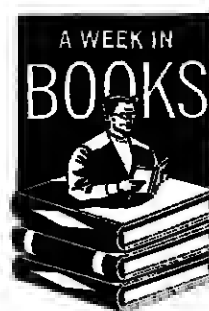
Then there's Mr Taylor's remarkable command of American socio-political nuance. Scott's racist southern grandfather voted Republican until Goldwater's defeat in 1964. How intriguing – as no southern redneck would have dared support the Republicans (the party of Lincoln, after all) until Ronnie Reagan came along. And then there's Scott's brother who sells timeshare apartments to movie stars in Montana. Benidorm-style timeshares in a state where the average movie-star ranch is 1500 acres? I love an author who does his research. As real estate *faux-pas* go, this is up there with: "And then I moved to London and rented a fabulous gothic castle in Cricklewood".

I could go on – because *English Settlement* is not simply riddled with fundamental inaccuracies; it is also street-dumb. Besides Mr Taylor's inability to make his narrator sound remotely American, the world Scott inhabits bears no relation to contemporary life.

If you set out to write a State of England/Between Two Cultures novel, the least you owe your reader is accurate reportage when it comes to workaday detail and the rhythms of speech. But, like so much bad literary fiction these days, *English Settlement* has no connection to life-on-the-street; rather, it is set in a preposterous Biba of preening and all-pervasive smugness.



Take that, respondent in lion-skin wrap, metaphorical grin and grained accessories, Antonia Poulakova's Hercules fights off the Hydra – a classic image of brute force, according to *The Hero: Manhood and Power* by John Lash (Thames & Hudson, £2.95). "Every contest between hero and monster suggests how the two must become entangled psychologically," muses Lash.



Just as a classic piece of women's fiction wins a major prize, we get positive discrimination. Emma Hagestadt sounds a warning

It's been a good year for literary women, particularly those living north of the Watford Gap. First the majestic Pat Barker made the journey down from Thornaby-on-Tees to the Guildhall to collect her Booker cheque for *The Ghost Road*; and this week, Yorkshire-born mother Kate Atkinson (younger and without the reassuring bosom) scooped up the 1995 Whitbread Book of the Year for her first novel, *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*. Both ladies are more likely to be found at Betty's Tea Room than schmoozing over Jack Daniels at the Groucho Club.

To those who complain that women have no place in the macho world of the Nineties novel, one could argue that at least Pat Barker won the Booker with a novel about men and war; whereas Atkinson's book is beyond any doubt high-octane "women's fiction". It concerns families, marriages, birth and death, all of it set above a pet shop in York. Nothing could be more intimate, provincial or riveting.

Behind the Scenes is like reading Margaret Forster on Vimto. It buzzes with peppy intelligence and unconventional good sense in its depiction of several generations of Yorkshire women in a family frustrated by bad marriages and bad luck. Atkinson writes with celestial cunning, and her meshing of Ruby's history with not only her mother's (the sour-faced Bunt) and with grandmothers and great-grandmothers, is the real triumph of the book.

But women haven't always been this lucky. In the last ten years, most of the big literary prizes (and most desirable cheques – £20,000 for the Booker, £21,000 for the Whitbread) have gone to

men. In the last ten years, female Booker winners have numbered only three – Penelope Lively in 1986, AS Byatt in 1990, Pat Barker last year – while the only female Whitbread laureate before Ms Atkinson was Joan Brady in 1993. In black and white terms, the boys have bagged £308,000, the girls £102,000.

With the launch this week of the "women only" Orange Prize for Fiction – £30,000 for the best English-language novel by a woman – the income prospects for literary ladies have taken a turn for the better. But since the Orange Prize is exclusively female, and will be judged by an all-women panel, its announcement has met with a predictable bray of disapproval. AS Byatt, for one, criticised the award for "ghettoising" women.

Perhaps the danger is that we shall start to think there is a ghetto called "women's literature", rather than a concept of "literature" that transcends gender. Women have indeed been under-represented in book prizes in the Nineties, but the reason for this may lie not in the macho prejudice of juries but in the zeitgeist: in the caution of publishers, in the lack of will among younger women authors to write literary fiction, in the extraordinary drift toward warlike and violent themes...

The Orange Prize may represent a clearing of the decks by women writers, a timely consideration of what fiction – by either sex – should be at the end of the century; but it's a reevaluation that needs careful monitoring. The Orange awards will apparently be known as "Bessies". Ms Atkinson's fictional Mum was called Bunt. We do not want to see "women's fiction" turning into the Bessie-Bunt school of modern literature.

Paperbacks

Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt and Christopher Hirst



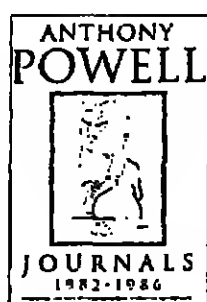
A Fex of the Heart by Jeremy Seal (Picador, £6.99)

Hats are the stepping stones of Turkish history, Seal suggests. After the abolition of the turban in 1826, the fez came to symbolise Turkey until it too was banned in 1925. In a marvellous *mélange* of travel and history, Seal pursues the lingering remnants of "fez culture" in order to probe the complex character of modern Turkey. Original and beautifully observed, the book reads like Chaitwin with jokes.



Sunrise with Sea Monster by Neil Jordan (Vintage, £5.99)

Neil Jordan's third novel is as sensuous as any of his films. Locked together in a terraced house above the Irish Sea, father and son find unexpected release with the arrival of a young piano teacher and the outbreak of war. A quietly melodramatic book that catches German submarines, sea monsters and lost love in one tight net.



Journals 1982-1986 by Anthony Powell (Heinemann, £9.99)

These jottings make you wish the novelist had kept a diary all his life. Along with much wispish wit, there is broad comedy as Powell, 80, tangles with the modern world. Mistakenly thinking Mrs Thatcher a fan of Apollinaire, he perplexes her by referring to the poet whenever they meet. Fascinated by genealogy, he muses about pop star Roger Daltrey, "a Lincolnshire name, connected with my mother's family, I think."



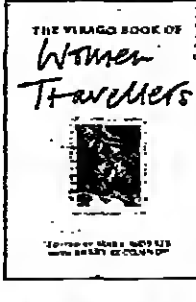
Remembering My Good Friends by George Weidenfeld (HarperCollins, £7.99)

Fresh from Nazi Vienna, George Weidenfeld compared entry into English society to stepping into a series of Turkish baths; but quicker than he could say "Vita Sackville-West", he was living it up in Fitzrovia, the Savoy and Oxfordshire. His fruitfully avuncular autobiography revels in encounters with the posh (The Longfords) and the good (The Pope).



The Last Great Frenchman by Charles Williams (Abacus, £12.99)

So intransigent during wartime exile that Churchill referred to him as "the beast of Hampstead", de Gaulle saw himself as France personified. By taking power in 1958, he "almost certainly saved the country from civil war". Charles Williams believes that he never forgave Britain for defeating Tudor France in 1588. This absorbing work reveals the introspective intellectual hidden behind the unbending public facade.



The Virago Book of Women Travellers, edited by Mary Morris (Virago, £8.99)

An unusually entertaining anthology of pieces by women travellers who took the bull by the horns, or in one case, the horse between the legs. Gems include Margaret Fountaine on chasing butterflies (and men) in Calabria; and the aptly named Ethel Briliana Tweedie on the perils of riding side-saddle.



A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper by John Allen Paulos (Penguin, £6.99)

As you would expect of a maths prof, Paulos deprecates the lazy thinking and statistical illiteracy he finds in the daily blats. He notes that a recipe claiming to provide 761 calories per serving is "meaningless precision". Chaos theory, Paulos says, explains why forecasts are often inaccurate: the best are short-term, simple and hazy. A revealing, if bitty, critique, user-friendly to the innumerate.



Married Love by Marie Stopes (Gollancz, £6.99)

Marie Stopes's classic exploration of sex and women's "sorrow" is still a fascinating read nearly 90 years after its first publication. Wonderfully lyrical when it comes to women's "moon-month" rhythms and "sex-rides", Stopes isn't afraid of naming mucus membranes or tumescent parts. An advocate of the revitalizing benefits of separate bedrooms and Alpine air.

We recommend...

Cross Channel by Julian Barnes (Cape, £13.99) Sexy, sweet and affectionate tales of life on the *Manche*.

Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life by Marjorie Garber (Hamish Hamilton, £25) Bisexuality and its meanings.

Dear Dodie by Valerie Grove (Chatto, £13.99) Entertaining biography of the live wire behind *The One Hundred and One Dalmatians*.

Whisky Galore read by Stanley Baxter (BBC Radio Collection, £7.99). Delicious Hebridean goings-on.



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You can plan your life by the stars, so why not your garden? 'Mystic' Anna Pavord presents a horticultural horoscope

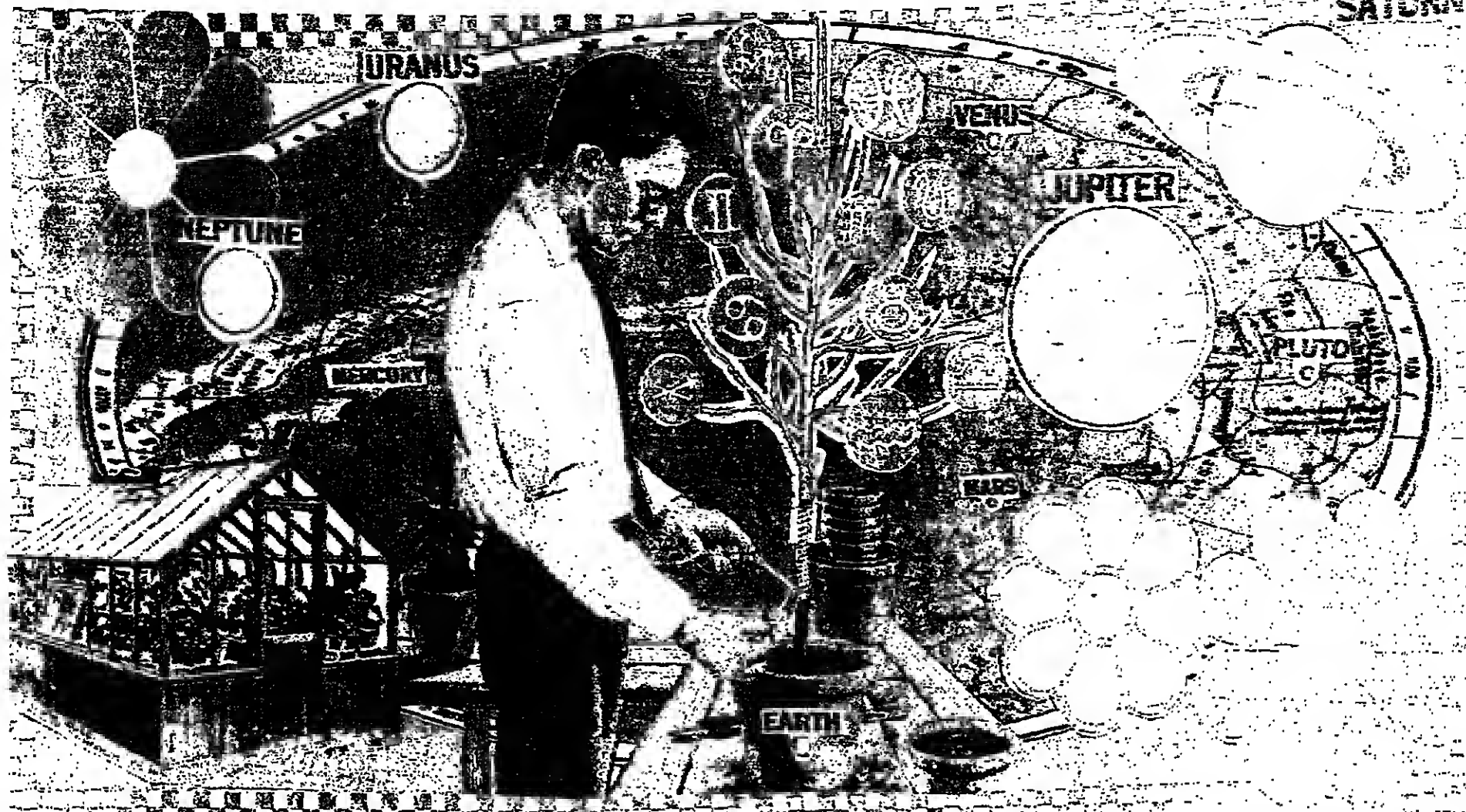
How can it be that a serious newspaper such as the *Independent* is still without a horoscope? Everybody knows what an important part they play in public life these days, and yet here we are with no Mystic Meg, no Petulengro or astrologist of any kind on the staff. It really is too bad. Most horoscopes, though, tend to be obsessed with peripheral matters: career opportunities, emotional relationships and such like. These are interesting enough in their way, but cannot compare with the really big issues: the arrival of a new pot in your life, the anxieties caused by a demanding aspidistra. Stargazers – start here.

Aquarius (22 Jan-19 Feb) Dream on Aquarians. One day you, too, could be asking a question on *Gardeners' Question Time*. But there is a danger that in your own garden, your dreams will never quite be translated into reality. Get round this problem neatly by designing gardens for other people instead. The future will always be more interesting to you than the past. Junk Jekyll. Think instead of pergolas of spun steel, water gardens of perspex and laser light shows among the lilies. Uranus in your birth sign makes it likely that you will want to try out things that others might regard as slightly eccentric. But if they don't like your *trompe-l'oeil* Taj Mahal in mirror and bottle tops, more fool them.

Pisces (20 Feb-20 Mar) The Sun in your birth sign after the 19th means that you will be able to do whatever you set your mind to over the next few weeks. But still, choices must be made. 'Kiftgate' rose or 'Rambling Rector'? 'Mermaid' or 'Paul's Himalayan'? Letting nature take its course can prove a doubtful doctrine as you may have already found this winter. Drains and poplars do not mix. Pisceans are apt to be lazy and take the line of least resistance: you are curiously drawn towards wildflower gardens. But Pisceans are also intuitive. You will recognise that a plant is in difficulty long before it is past saving, a useful trait in a gardener.

Aries (21 Mar-20 April) Arians are good at getting round obstacles and are extremely energetic. All your ebullient energy will be needed this month to circumvent some great drama. It may involve a neighbour. It may involve a boundary. You like quick results, which makes you an impatient gardener. Try this year to curb the trait. In the garden centre, avoid annuals which will die this year and go for perennials which will die next year instead. After the 15th, Mars, your ruler, moves into a tricky part of your chart. Avoid this period for servicing lawnmowers.

Taurus (21 Apr-21 May) Happiness is a more obscure salvia than your neighbour's and in this game of horticultural one-upmanship, Taurians will score every time for they are careful, tenacious gardeners. Venus, your ruler, enters the bossy sign of Aries on the 9th and the days thereafter may be full of anxiety. Should it be petunias rather than busy lizzies in the front border this year? Choose carefully, for old ties, once severed, may never be remade. Your worst fault is stubbornness. Try and accept advice more readily. But on the positive side this can be said: you do not believe in short cuts. Taurians always read the instructions on a pack of weedkiller.



Gemini (22 May-21 Jun) Criticism never goes down well with Gemini, but it is, after all, such a good idea to plant an all-black garden? It is vagueish, certainly, but you may begin to find it just the teensiest bit limiting. You can have too much even of ophiopogon. Finance continues to be a problem and will be until you learn that you do not necessarily have to throw away the potted camellias after they have finished flowering. You are good at pretending to know more than you do, love variety and will be a compulsive buyer of garden gadgets. Speaking of which, there is the most amazing gismo around now which cuts edges, shaves legs and minces parsley.

Cancer (22 Jun-22 Jul) Your delight in the difficult comes to the fore this month when seedlings, always keener on dying than living, demand your attention. Pluto, warring with Mars on the 19th, indicates difficulties in your personal life. Hang on, though: your partner's predilection for mixing purple and orange in the herbaceous border has almost run its course. You are known for your delight in looking after things, so you are likely to find yourself teamed up with tricky alpines. Failing that, you may invent immensely complicated life-support systems for your house plants when you go away. But this might be the year when you discover that you can get seeds which actually take less than a year to germinate.

Leo (23 Jul-23 Aug) This is a decisive month for Leos as it marks the start of the giant onion season, the Leo's favourite plant. Make the most of it. Pluto has a challenging aspect which may mean that slugs are massing. The limelight you enjoy will pass you by unless you attend assiduously to watering and pricking out. Outrageous flowers such as gladioli and dahlias, chrysanthemums and begonias are much more likely to be your thing than the more tasteful euphorbias and bellebores. Leos are generous, though, and therefore goodpeople to have as neighbours. "My rose is your rose," they will say munificently as their 'Bobby James' ramble climbs over the boundary fence and reaches 15ft tentacles across your lawn.

Virgo (24 Aug-23 Sep) The sun in something or other provides just the boost you need to lash out on a really exciting new asset. A lawn edger, perhaps. You know how you fret if the grass is a whisker out of place. Loved ones do not help this month by leaving tools lying unseen in the shrubbery. All the portents suggest that your black eye will have healed by the solstice. You are likely to be a good planner and organiser but you must learn not to fret if things do not always go as they should. But then that's gardening for you. You are probably best left to garden on your own, for you can be hypercritical, often unfairly, of other people's efforts.

Libra (24 Sep-23 Oct) Unexpected developments are about to alter the whole course of your gardening life. Look for love among the bonsai trees, however unlikely this may seem. Everything this month points towards a complete break with the past. Chuck out all your hostas and think Japanese. Librans are star gardeners for they are diplomatic, love harmony and are brilliant mediators. Get yourself elected chairman of your county's National Gardens Scheme committee. They need you. Occasional indecision is your only downfall, but when you have decided, the results in your own garden are likely to be much photographed. Librans get their gardens into all the best magazines.

Scorpio (24 Oct-22 Nov) Your delight in a bargain has unexpected consequences when officers of the Fraud Squad turn up to repossess the divine little cherub you picked up for two songs in Pimlico. The National Trust logo stamped firmly on the base should have warned you that something perhaps was amiss. Never mind. Back to Haddonstone. You are likely to have a beady eye for everyone else's business as well as your own. Trust a Scorpio to give you the cheapest source of supply for anything from compost to cotoneasters. You are also likely to be argumentative. When at dinner parties stay off contentious issues such as peat and pesticides.

Sagittarius (23 Nov-21 Dec) You need to assert your independence this month – and fast. No matter what the style gurus say, it is perfectly possible to plant a garden without a single grey-leaved plant in it. Try it and see. There are other far-reaching changes on the horizon. Goodbye chrysanthemum. Hello dendranthema, leucanthemopsis, arctanthemum, tanacetum... You do not always realise how hurtful your bluntness, a characteristic of all Sagittarians, can be. Some people really do love cacti dressed up in sunglasses and paper skirts. It is not your place to stop them buying them. You rarely sulk, however. But it is equally rare for you to learn from your mistakes. Sagittarians murder more rhododendrons than any other group of gardeners.

Capricorn (22 Dec-21 Jan) Long-standing attachments are hard to break but, for once, forget the pennies and lash out on a pair of secateurs. They will be so much easier to use on the philadelphus than the bayonet from the hardware store in the hall. Economical is the polite way to describe Capricorn gardeners. You are the people who save seeds wrapped in screws of paper in old Ovaltine tins and who hover round the recycling bins, waiting to retrieve *Gardeners Illustrated* magazines that other souls are throwing away. But you are likely to work hard, not shirking even the most hideous chores such as scrubbing down the greenhouse. If you are hiring help in the garden, check birthdates first.

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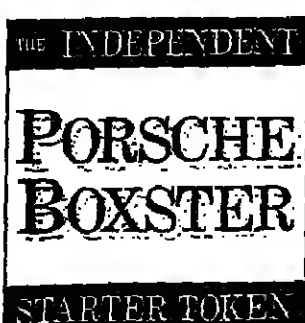
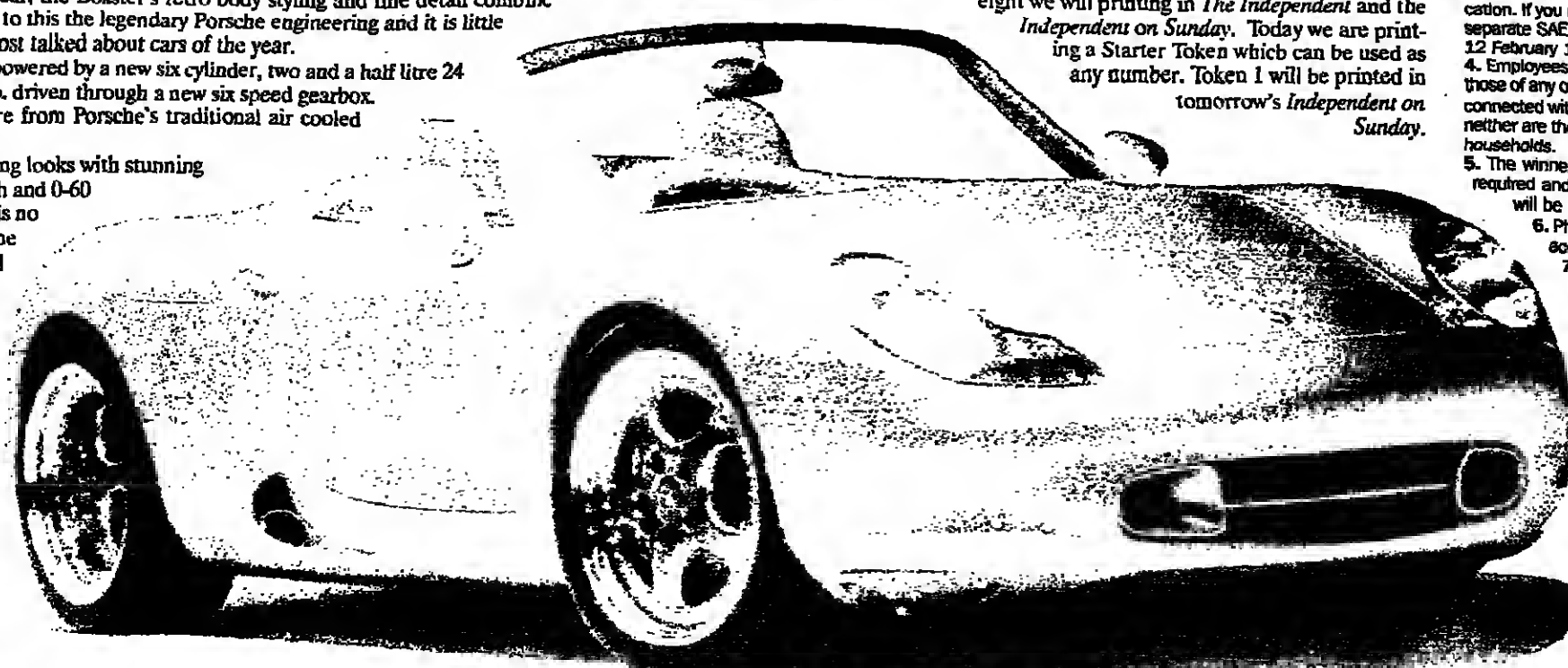
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Rules:

1. To enter our Porsche Boxster prize draw you need to collect five differently numbered tokens from the eight we will be printing (including a starter token which can be used as any number).
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RECLAIMING THE COUNTRYSIDE 1: FARMLAND Britain's wildlife is under threat. Malcolm Smith looks at ways farmers can repair the damage they have done

Call this green and pleasant land?

On Boundary Farm at Framsden, near Stowmarket in Suffolk, barn owls are hunting over the winter-chilled fields. Come the spring, along with partridges and a couple of pairs of lapwings, the owls will breed; an indicator, according to the farmer, Chris Bacon, that Boundary Farm's wildlife is on the up.

A few decades ago, these farmland species – and an awful lot more – would have been taken for granted. What cereal field didn't have a scattering of scarlet poppies and blue cornflowers? What hay meadow wasn't alive with grasshoppers or didn't have skylarks ascending over it?

That was before Britain's agricultural revolution. Fuelled by the EC's Common Agricultural Policy, our farmland has been transformed. Pastures and meadows have been ploughed up, wetlands drained, hedges grubbed out and crops sprayed with copious quantities of insecticides, all because of a policy obsession with producing more and more food irrespective of the cost or of its environmental impact.

The destruction of wildlife has been unprecedented. In the 50 years to 1984, England and Wales lost 97 per cent of its natural lowland grasslands, the haunt of celandines, of blue butterflies, of shrews and reed huntings. Limestone and chalk grassland – one of our richest habitats for flowers and insects – is reduced to 40,000 hectares countrywide. Sussex, alone, lost a quarter of its chalk grassland between 1966 and 1980. According to the British Trust for Ornithology, 24 out of 28 farmland bird species are in decline.

Skyllarks, for instance, have declined by 58 per cent over the last 25 years, a loss of three million birds. Others have fared even worse; tree sparrows down by 89 per cent and grey partridge by 82 per cent. Many once abundant flowers, insects and mammals – from shrews to brown hares – are now few and far between on Britain's farms.

Apart from habitat loss, Andy Evans and his colleagues at the RSPB list two other crucial changes which have affected farmland birds.



Firstly, most farmers have switched from sowing cereal crops in the spring to sowing them in autumn. So winter stubbles – a rich source of spilt grain and of flower and grass seeds left behind after the crop has been cut – are now uncommon. It's thought to be a major factor in the demise of the corn bunting.

Secondly, insecticide sprays have annihilated many of the invertebrates which oestlings are fed on. Spraying crops with selective herbicides to eliminate unwanted flowers not only

depletes the plants themselves but it removes the habitat many of the invertebrates need. The paucity of sawfly larvae appears to be a major factor in the decline of farmland grey partridge.

Spurred on by the CAP's largesse, more and more farmers in the 1960s and 1970s intensified and specialised – into cereal growing, into dairy cattle farming, or into sheep grazing. Mixed farms have been disappearing at the rate of some 1,400 a year.

But in the last decade the CAP has been modifying its shape, largely as a

result of mounting criticism over food surpluses and their storage but partly, too, because of the destruction of wildlife habitats. Schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), Stewardship in England, Tir Cymen in Wales, the Habitats Scheme and others are all designed, in one way or another, to make annual payments to farmers in exchange for them farming in a much more environmentally sensitive way. Slowly, they are helping to put back some of the lost habitats and wildlife.

"I've entered 50 acres of grassland into the Suffolk River Valleys ESA," says Chris Bacon. "We're going to be taking a hay cut and grazing it afterwards. These fields were all arable until recently but in the old days they were meadows. The idea is to get them richer in plants again," he adds.

In the middle of Mr Bacon's land is the six-acre Fox Frithley Meadow owned by the Suffolk Trust for Nature Conservation, a haven for snakeshead fritillaries, beautiful, purple flowers reminiscent of drooping tulips. Like

their damp meadow habitat, they were once more common. A few have reappeared in Mr Bacon's fields adjacent to the Trust's meadow, an early sign of their recovery.

Setaside, introduced compulsorily in 1992 to take cereal growing land out of production, is also benefiting wildlife. Rotational setaside, where the fields taken out of production are different ones each year, is of less value because it doesn't allow wildlife habitat – except weedy stubbles for seed-eating birds – to develop long term.

Setting aside the same fields or field edges for several years is better. Allowing a grassland to grow where once there was a copiously sprayed field of barley attracts not only flowers but ground nesting birds like skylarks and lapwings, voles and shrews increase too, so now uncommon barn owls have choice in their farmland diet once again.

So far, 1.5 million acres of land in the UK are setaside. The RSPB believes that it could become one of the most important means of reintroducing wildlife to many farms long devoid of the habitats and species they once nurtured. But much more flexibility is required in the rules, especially to allow farmers to graze livestock on land setaside to manage it effectively for wildlife.

Superficially, England's green and pleasant land appears just that. But in its artificial greening – the result of dosing with fertilisers and pesticides – our farmland has lost most of the wildlife it nurtured into the 1950s.

Repairing the damage has begun. According to the RSPB, the CAP must be further reformed to encourage a reduction in the intensity of farming operations, a return to more mixed farming and to protect traditional practices which conserve habitats such as sheep grazing on chalk grassland. They also want to see more lowland farmland put back to species-rich heathland, woodland wetlands and grassland. That way, farmers can grow wildlife as well as food on their land and put a feather back in the CAP.

It was his smell, not his anorak, that caused chaos

Deer-stalking one autumn in Dargyllshire, we conceived an ambitious plan to go for some stags which we had seen, through telescopes, lying out day after day on a face at the far end of the forest. It meant an early start, and after a strenuous three-and-a-half hour approach march, we were having a breather within striking distance of our quarry.

Then, to our infinite chagrin, we spotted a single hiker coming down the ridge from Ben Starav, a prominent peak to the north. His sky-blue anorak and white woolly hat with red bobble on it made him immensely conspicuous – but it was his smell, rather than his appearance, that caused chaos. Long before he came into the view of the deer, a whiff of his scent sent the stags hurtling away round the shoulder of the hill.

We never found them again. The hiker disappeared. He never saw us. He never saw the deer. He cannot have had any idea that he had ruined our plan and our day – but all we could do in the afternoon was trudge for home.

It was incidents of this kind, repeated a hundred times over



DUFF HART-DAVIS

and with ever-increasing frequency, that led eventually to the "Concordat on Access" to the Scottish hills which was ceremonially signed last week at Bartsby, near Perth, the headquarters of Scottish Natural Heritage. So contentious is the whole subject that meetings had been going on intermittently for nearly two years, and the paper passed through eight drafts before everyone was satisfied with its wording.

Several of the participants – ramblers, mountaineers, farmers, deer-forest owners, local authorities – reckon the Access Forum would have foundered but for the exceptional diplomatic skills of Magnus Magnusson, Chairman of SNH, who directed proceedings.

The Concordat rings with

phrases designed to promote tolerance on all sides. Freedom of access to the hills should be "exercised with responsibility"; visitors must accept "the needs of land management" and "have respect for the needs of livestock and wildlife"; land-managers must recognise "the public's expectation of having access to the hills".

One aim of the agreement is to defuse the confrontational attitude of organisations such as the Ramblers' Association, which have tended to regard the deer-forest owners as the enemy. In a way such antagonism has been inevitable, for the deer-forest ground covers a vast range – some six million acres of open hill, and nearly two million of plantations – and encompasses most of the Highlands.

The paramount need of the owners is to cull their herds efficiently so that they can keep numbers to a level which the environment can sustain. It is thus vital to them that in the culling season – autumn and early winter – their ground is disturbed as little as possible.

On the other hand hikers and mountaineers do not see why they should be barred from land that is apparently open to all.

The answer, of course, is compromise. The owners now accept that they must provide more information. Notices beside paths, warning visitors that stalking is in progress, will be friendlier and fuller than in the past. Leaflets explaining when, where and why culling has to take place will be made available in information centres, hotels and pubs. Another idea is to set up an efficient hill telephone service, with answer-tapes saying which areas will or will not be safe during the next 24 hours.

The owners naturally hope that visitors will respond to such initiatives and realise that "factors other than their own enjoyment also have importance". They know that the Concordat is a fragile agreement, not supported by law; but they prefer a voluntary solution of their problems to a legal one, and now, as Mr Gibbs puts it, they "very much hope that everyone will join in to make it work".

gardening

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travel skiing

The armchair skier

If you can't afford the sort of fantasy skiing shown on these pages, relax. You can experience it on video. By Liese Spencer

In Search of Powder

Scott and buddies, retiring to remote corners of Montana in search of powder and perfection, drive endlessly towards the camera or drop from cliffs to the sounds of a *Beavis and Butt-head*-style soundtrack. The film captures spectacular scenery as the boys snowmobile into untracked territory, building igloos and following a New Age ethos of non-polluting sportsmanship. Worth watching for the trip to Antarctica. *Columbia TriStar, 50 mins, £18.99*

P-Tex Lies and Duct Tape

A snowstorm has been raging in British Columbia for four days - cue for powder-junkie Greg Stump to ignore avalanche warnings and get out on Whistler mountain. A bizarre mix of tectonic history, mogul championships and nude skiing is topped by the inexplicable presence of a hooded skier moving between the trees. *Black Diamond, 75 mins, £16.99*

The Hedonist

Here absolute pleasure is "flying through space off a 50ft cliff". While snowscape from Chamonix to Alaska provides breathtaking imagery, the film is fronted by nerds in shades, modelling their facial hair for the camera. Watching this makes you wish the gang would try jumping off a cliff without skis. *Black Diamond, 45 mins, £18.99*

Soul Session and Epic Impressions

Snowboarders carve into pristine slopes, while expert skiers race down vertiginous paths, skimming the ground with gravity-defying elegance. This makes you wish a helicopter would drop you on a mountain top and leave you to find your own way down - until scenes of a skier disappearing into an avalanche remind you of the pleasures of armchair skiing. *Black Diamond, 45 mins, £18.99*

Videos available from Snow+Rock shops. Details: 0171-937 0872

Snow reports

The snow promised last weekend arrived midweek - but only in parts. Some of the heaviest snow has fallen in Italy, with the unfortunate effect of putting off the World Cup downhill race scheduled for yesterday in Sestriere. France has also had some fresh snow, but many of the northern resorts missed out (Chamonix is only two-thirds open). Hardly any Swiss or Austrian resorts have had new snow and rock-hard pistes are about the best you can hope

for there. Conditions in eastern Europe are no better than fair, but in the Pyrenees Andorra is enjoying about the best skiing in Europe. The very best skiing of all is in North America: although the much-publicised thaw has turned Vermont's skiing into hard-pack, in the Rockies snow midweek added to the existing good base. Most resorts in Colorado and Utah have 1m to 2m of snow even at resort level - Snowbird as usual leads the field with around 3m.

You can spend £600 a night to stay in the Austrian resort of Gstaad. Is it worth it?

Chris Gill checks out the world's six most glamorous ski resorts

Even if budgetary considerations confine most of us to routinely expensive resorts such as Val d'Isère and St Anton, it's reassuring to see that the other half - well, the other 5 per cent - have pretty much the same sort of skiing as we do. As it happens, skiing in the most glamorous resorts is not necessarily much more expensive than doing so in any big, internationally known resort. But it certainly can be more expensive if you make the most of what's on offer in the hotels, restaurants and shops.

In our selection of the world's six most glamorous resorts, it's only right that affluent Switzerland should be allowed more than its fair share. Students of royal ski expeditions will look in vain for Klosters; it's not particularly glamorous and is certainly not a self-consciously smart resort - the Prince of Wales goes for the skiing and warm reception.

Aspen

If you're going for American swank, this old mining town in Colorado is the place. The standard view is that Aspen attracts mainly film stars and other celebrities, who seek seclusion in private mansions. But lesser mortals can be cosseted in the opulent Ritz-Carlton or splendid Victorian Jerome (even more expensive at £250 to £480 per room per night), and choose from scores of restaurants before shooting pool in a basement dive or wangling entry to the Caribou Club. Shopping for expensive trinkets as well as clothes is a major activity, coming a close second to skiing on no less than four excellent mountains, from small but steep Aspen Mountain above the town to big and varied Snowmass, 12 miles away.



Aspen: the shopping is great, the skiing is better

Courchevel

With two restaurants earning twin Michelin stars, the smartest resort in France is also the gastronomic capital of skiing. But the thousands of Brits who flock here each winter come for the excellence and extent of the Trois Vallées skiing, stay in catered chalets and eat picnics and Mars bars at lunch time. To break the mould, fly in by air taxi to the airstrip amid the ski fields, stay up in the exclusive Jardin des Alpes (or perhaps in the rather vulgar Byblos des Neiges with rooms at a mere £250-£500 a

night), lunch only just above village level at the Chalet de Pierres and dine at the Bateau Ivre.

Cortina d'Ampezzo

Italy's most fashionable resort by a considerable margin - in season, a feast for the eyes, when the spectacular Dolomite scenery is complemented by sun terraces full of sharp-dressing Italian visitors. Many of the best lunch spots are accessible by car - a happy arrangement, since many of their patrons would not be seen dead on skis, despite the gloriously long

and spacious nursery slopes. For lunch at the Michelin-starred Tivoli, allow £30 even with a weak lira. A good resort for intermediates, but not much to offer experts.

Gstaad

Consumption seems relatively inconspicuous here, in what is nevertheless one of the most upmarket of Switzerland's resorts. The winding main street might be that of any Vaudois country village, were it not for the number of Geneva jewellers with outlets there. But ride up a ski-lift on the

surrounding prettily wooded hills and into view come the turrets of the Disney-style Palace hotel, where half-board goes from £200-£600 (per night), and the private chalets where Gstaad habitués spend their winter months. The skiing is low and fragmented; if you're keen, go elsewhere.

Lech-Zürs

These distinct but linked villages, high in the exceptionally snowy Arlberg mountains close to St Anton, are Austria's smartest - this is the only area in the country where environmental opposition to heli-skiing is ignored. The Princess of Wales patronises pretty Lech, and Princess Caroline of Monaco may or may not still visit less appealing Zürs, but fat Mercedes with German plates sliding into underground garages define the market. For après-skiers, the ice bar of the Tannbergshof is the place to be seen, having flicked your flexible friend across the counters of Stroiz - a mini department store that seems to sell anything provided it costs enough.

St Moritz

The Swiss resort first patronised in winter by the dowdy British is now among the smartest in the Alps. Of the five-star hotels, you may feel at home in the dull Kulm or the pleasantly secluded Suvretta, but Vivella-clad Brits aiming to relive past glories on the Cresta run or explore the scenic and entertaining ski area should leave the glossy Carlton to the Germans and the Gothic excesses of Badrutt's Palace (half-board £200-£500 a night) to the Yanks. Lunch should be at the slick Marmite (£30 for a plate of pasta), dinner out at Champfer - allow £60 for the Michelin-starred John's Talvo.

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Chopper helis

Heliskiing is just one of the options for the adventurous skier with a big budget. By Chris Gill

Imagine that tonight's lottery has come up with the goods. Countis is pestering you to open an account, and your skiing plans are no longer limited by money worries. All you have to do now is decide what kind of skiing you'd really like to indulge in. In case you're short of them, here are some ideas.

For those with a taste for adventurous skiing and with no interest in *après-ski* indulgence, there is no question about what comes top of the agenda: heliskiing in the Canadian Rockies. Canadian heliskiing has three key components: helicopters to provide uplift, huge quantities of powder snow, and deserted mountain ranges on which the snow can fall and on which the helicopters can land. This simple recipe produces the closest thing to paradise for a competent skier.

Note that I do not say expert or athletic skier. Heliskiing need not involve steep slopes and, thanks to the recently introduced "fat" skis, does not even need the level of skill that you would normally associate with off-piste skiing in the Alps. If it did, it would not attract nearly so many well-heeled middle-aged skiers.

The companies that run these heli operations have their own lodges deep in the Rockies, where you are billeted in comfort but not luxury for the duration of your stay. Each day, the chopper ferries your group of around 10 people up to a remote slope of virgin snow, retrieving you at the end of the run and depositing you at the top of another. And so on, until you use up your allotted "vertical" – at which point you reach for your credit card and start buying more uplift.

At least, that's the theory. It is possible, of course, to encounter a week's blizzards in which the choppers are grounded, and you get a great opportunity to improve your backgammon skills or write the first couple of chapters of your novel. You just have to hope that you don't.

Canadian heliskiing is dominated by two outfits, both with UK agents. CMH operates from eight lodges, mostly in remote settings. Each accommodates 44 skiers – rather like a large catered chalet in the Alps, with open fires to reinforce the mountain lodge atmosphere and comforting extras such as a sauna, Jacuzzi and in-house masseur.

Mike Weigle operates from a bigger central base at Blue River. Right now, Canadian heliskiing is a bit of a bargain because of the weak dollar. Reckon on £2,500 to £3,500 a week – more if you do a lot of extra vertical.

Heliskiing is all very well, but it does put the emphasis very much on the activity of skiing, and not at all on the pampering that can go with it when the budget allows. For a sharp contrast – the sharpest there is – the top-flight hotels of Switzerland take some beating. Opposite this page, you'll find a beginners' guide to the smartest hotels in St Moritz – the greatest concentration of upmarket lodging in the known universe. What these hotels offer is not so much luxurious variations on the usual Alpine accommodation as a kind of complete insulation from the harsh winter world outside. Apart from the stunning views from the windows, once inside you could be almost anywhere.

You don't even need to go to the trouble of booking such hotels yourself. Get hold of the Inghams brochure and you'll find not only the three central five-stars in St Moritz, but also some equally

swanky alternatives in other Swiss resorts – notably Zermatt's Grand Hotel Zermatterhof – and further afield. Even the favoured Alpine retreat of the Princess of Hearts, for example – the Arlberg in Lech, Half-board high-season one-week packages run from £1,400 to £2,150.

Smart hotels mean conforming – to the expectations of fellow guests if not to the rules of the establishment. Privacy is the key to real self-indulgence, and that means private lodgings with servants attached. And lodgings don't come any more private than Trapper's Cabin, high on the ski slopes near Vail and reachable only by ski or snowcat. The idea here is that you get to spend the night in complete (and splendidly luxurious) isolation, but don't have the chore of self-catering the chef skis away after dinner. The place sleeps 10, and costs \$550 per person per night.

There is skiing, beyond the horizons of Europe and North America, and some of it is very worthwhile. Your newly enlarged budget will not prevent you exploring the intensive resorts of Japan, the high and scenic ski areas of South America, and the

heliskiing potential of New Zealand – the last two coming on stream during our summer, of course. This sort of expedition makes most sense if you combine it with some regular tourism or visits to long-lost relatives, and could easily soak up several thousands of those spare pounds.

Wherever you decide to blow your winnings, you'll want to look the part. Chain-store clothing won't do. For your heli outing you'll want the toughest "technical" kit in order to look the part – perhaps £550 for an outer shell from The North Face and £300 for fleecy layers. For posing in St Moritz, a Bogner one-piece can cost you anything up to £1400.

Heliskiing: CMH – contact Powder Skiing in North America 0171-736 8191; Mike Weigle – contact Fresh Tracks 0181-875 9818 or Ski Scott Dunn 0181-767 0202. For an Inghams brochure call 0181-780 4450. More details about Trapper's Cabin near Vail on 00 1 970 845 5788. For kit information start with Snow + Rock's catalogue – call 01932 569569

Well, Hello! Fancy seeing you here

Who skis where. By Charlotte Packer

While Prince Charles and his reindeer remain faithful to Klosters, other members of the Royal family have looked further afield for their skiing thrills. Diana has discovered the joys of Lech in Austria, and two years ago she kicked up a flurry of excitement when she hit Vail (the cod Swiss skiing village in Colorado favoured by Tom Hanks and John F Kennedy), and provoked much speculation about a romance with a local businessman. The Princess Royal skis at Morzine in France, and Prince Edward, longtime fan of St Anton, has been seen on the slopes of Whistler in British Columbia. But for Fergie, the comparative peace at Klosters has become an increasingly attractive alternative to her pre-Andrew baubles of glitzy St Moritz and Verbier.

The popularity of Swiss ski resorts with the international jet-set has probably more to do with the country's excellent banking facilities than its skiing conditions and Royal patrons. Gstaad is renowned for its unpredictable snowfall and yet boasts a strong celebrity following. David Bowie, Blake Edwards and Julie Andrews, and Roger Moore – none of whom are noted for their skills on the piste – all have homes there. Meanwhile Elizabeth Taylor has graced Zermatt with her presence, though whether she was there for the skiing, the shopping or the socialising is not known.

Italian resorts don't seem to attract many famous faces, but devotees include Julia Carling and Claudia Schiffer, who was apparently assaulted by a man wielding a bobble-head while she was staying at Cortina in the Dolomites. For classy *après-ski* sessions, and a spot of alternative royal watching, you could head for Austria where Queen Juliana of the Netherlands and obscure Swedish Royals are said to squeeze into their *salopettes* and slip on their skis alongside the likes of Peter Gabriel and Kim Wilde.

Over in the States, Aspen has long been the favourite resort of the Hollywood set, and this is the time of year to catch the likes of Jack Nicholson, Don Johnson, Goldie Hawn, Kurt Russell, Cher, Harry Hamlin, Steven Spielberg, Martina Navratilova and Barbara Streisand, on the piste. It was rumoured that Hugh Grant was looking for a second home here, presumably too over by talk of Aspen's divine landscape.

Back in the Forties the great and the good of the film industry would have packed their skis and headed for Sun Valley, Idaho. Here you might have gawped at the likes of Gary Cooper, Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. These days the resort is back in favour with Hollywood and Sigourney Weaver, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Clint Eastwood and Bruce Willis have all been spotted going through their paces. Should a celeb hunt in Sun Valley prove fruitless, the automated snow system, which is one of the largest in the world, will at least guarantee plenty of snow and good skiing.

Working its way up in the popularity stakes is Telluride in the spectacular San Juan Mountains of Colorado where Sylvester Stallone has a ranch, and Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman got hitched five years ago. The nearby Beaver Creek resort is the haunt of Gerald Ford, Dan Quayle, Oprah Winfrey and Brooke Shields.

For Ivana Trump, one time Czech National Ski Team member, nowhere beats the Bugaboos in Canada, and she should know as she's skied at all the key European and North American resorts. She, like John Denver and King Juan Carlos of Spain, is a keen fan of heli-skiing.



The Aspen set (from top): LA Law's Harry Hamlin, Kurt Russell (right) with Danny Sullivan, and Martina Navratilova. Photographs: Colorific!

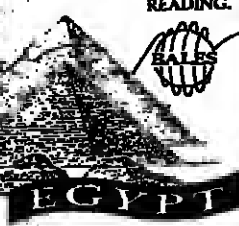


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Very good if you like aeroplanes and trains
– Anon

I didn't know there was a Bristol car – Bob Grieves, Bristol

Gratefully appreciate the disabled facilities
– Anon

Very good, but small children can't see over displays. A step by most items would help
– Steve, Bristol

Better than SS Great Britain, and cheaper!
– Greatrex family, Keynsham, Avon

I would have liked to sit in Concorde – David Oram, Bath

Bargain of the week

Travellers between the West Country and London are finding weekend journeys difficult because of the rail line being closed between Reading and Swindon. But a price war among bus operators on the M4

Trouble spots

This week's advice from our man in the Foreign Office

Corsica: "Since November, there has been a series of bomb attacks by extreme nationalists on public buildings throughout Corsica. The attacks seem to be increasing in intensity. Take reasonable care in the vicinity of public buildings."

Guatemala: "Violent crime is prevalent throughout Guatemala, especially in and around the capital and other tourist areas. Muggers are often well-armed. Do not attempt to resist when being robbed. Register with the British Embassy on arrival (321601) for an update on the current situation."

Mali: "Mali is relatively trouble-free. Although travel to Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao is possible, caution should be exercised in the area north of Mopti where banditry is still a risk."

Java: "Indonesia is prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters. Avoid Mount Merapi and surrounding areas in Central Java. Further information can be obtained from the Directorates of Volcanology at Bandung (022 772606) and Yogyakarta (0274 514180)."

Foreign Office travel advice is available on 0171-270 4129, on BBC2. CeeFax page 564 onwards and on the Internet at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

means you can save a fortune between Bristol and London – and get to the capital more quickly than the rail-hus-rail arrangement being used by BR. National Express (0990 808080) is charging

£8.75 for a day return, and this is matched by Bakers Dolphio (01934 616000). The latter company reduces the fare for the 240-mile round trip to just £7.45 for senior citizens and students.

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Ugly, polluted, corrupt. Amazing

Peking is full of contradictions. Follow the tour guides and you'll miss the point. Teresa Poole should know. She lives there

On about day three of a typical China package tour, Western visitors to the capital city tend to wake up suffering from "Jet-lag Peking duck Syndrome". It marks the first of many victories to be scored by China over unwary foreign tourists. The idea seems to be to exhaust the city's visitors into submission at an early stage. Within 48 hours of arriving, the tour group will have been marched through Tiananmen Square, around the Forbidden City, up the Great Wall and down again, and herded through the Ming tombs. The Peking duck banquet, in all its greasy splendour, represents the final assault on the innocents abroad. Tour group members awake the next morning feeling their stamina already drained and wistfully remembering how they spurned the option of a trip to Bali.

That is when the more robust might profitably decide that a tour-group holiday in China is rather missing the point. Peking's temples cannot compete with those in South-east Asia, the food on offer to tourists is mostly dreadful, and there is none of the opulence of many other Asian capitals.

Peking is an ugly, polluted, corrupt city whose population has a developed sense of disdain for foreigners. Yet that is part of the reason to come. For Peking is also, arguably, the most extraordinary capital in the world, the political centre of a country that 16 years ago decided to reinvent itself using a melange of Communist control and capitalist free-for-all. Off the tourist trail, life is a bundle of contradictions, conflicts and annoyances, where sometimes it seems that the only Asian value left is an insatiable desire for money.

These are complaints voiced by Pekingers themselves. Of course, visit the Great Wall, but it is the country's most recent history that will leave the deepest impression on any visitor who makes a bit of an effort. Most Western tourists arrive already aware of the contradictions. They remember the graphic TV pictures of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown when the Chinese army stormed through Peking killing unarmed protesters. Yet, since then, the "story" from China has been one of unprecedented economic improvement, streets jammed with imported saloon cars, a real-estate development bonanza, and an export industry that has suddenly put "Made in China" labels in products across the world.

That contrast is precisely what makes Peking such an interesting city. Most foreigners, for instance, complain heatedly about the traffic. Yet watch, for a moment, how many of the fanciest cars carry the tell-tale white number-plates

which identify them as military or People's Armed Police vehicles. Marvel at the city's traffic police who, about six weeks ago, metamorphosed overnight into human robots. It was part of a propaganda exercise aimed at brushing up the image of the police. Now they stand on their podiums, choreographed into perfect uniformity, never an arm bent out of line.

It is in Peking's lanes – or *hutongs* – that you can glimpse the old world of the city. Around Houhai Park, or to the east of Dongdan shopping street, you can wander down any lane, and the challenges of modernising such a city immediately become apparent. These are the traditional courtyard homes, picturesque from the outside but on the inside usually desperately crowded and lacking in such luxuries as toilets. Look into the yards to see the bizarre mixture that makes up many families' lives: the inevitable bicycles, a wall of cabbages stored during the winter, and in the main room state-of-the-art television and karaoke equipment.

On a Sunday, head for one of the city's parks, perhaps Beihai or the Temple of Heaven, for the most romantic view of Peking life. Soon after dawn, blue-suited old men will arrive, carrying their songbirds in cages which they bang in the trees. For hours they play chess, or sit idly talking. Throughout the early morning, local Pekingers turn up to take their daily exercises. In my local, Ritan Park, old women exercise their brains (they say) by walking backwards, Chinese of all ages practice shadow boxing and other martial arts, and one group of middle-aged women meet for disco keep fit.

This is, of course, not the modern Peking hurtling down the expressway of economic reform. For that, visit a big shopping centre (try the Landao department store or the Hongqiao indoor market), and see a national retail spending spree in action. Wander through the outdoor market of "Silk Alley" and see if you can resist the advances of the hawkers selling pirated CD-Roms from southern China for a fraction of the cost back home. Bravely go where few Westerners dare to tread – a Chinese karaoke lounge, and witness the major national pastime.

If it all gets too much, do not retreat to some hotel restaurant where the menu is printed in English. The Chinese, for all their nationalistic fervour, are at their most tolerant in situations involving food. Pick any brightly lit restaurant, order a round of Peking draught beers (*Beijing jia pi*), and point to a few key words in the Chinese phrase book. It will probably taste awful, but the look on everyone's faces will be worth every unidentifiable mouthful.



Never out of line: 'about six weeks ago, Peking's traffic police were turned into human robots'

Photo: Greg Baker/AP

How to get there

British Airways and Air China fly non-stop twice a week between London Heathrow and Peking, but the lowest fares are available from discount agents for travel on other airlines. For example, Campus Travel (0171-730 8111) has a fare of £493, including tax, on Air France from London, Birmingham, Edinburgh or Manchester via Paris.

How about by rail?

Regular trains operate between Moscow and Peking, with connections from western Europe and to Hong Kong. Most travellers make the week-long journey only in one direction, and fly the other. A basic round trip comprising a flight from London to Moscow, train to Peking and onwards to Hong Kong, with a flight back to London, would cost around £750 through companies such as Bridge the World (0171-911 0900), Regent Holidays (0117 921 1711) and the Russia Experience (0181-566 8846). There are endless stopover possibilities, but these can add substantially to the cost.

How tangled is the red tape?

British passport holders need a Chinese visa, which is most easily obtained through the China Travel Service, 7 Upper St Martin's Lane WC2H 9DL (0171-836 9911); this agency charges £10 on top of the normal £25 fee. Allow a week for processing. You can obtain a visa more quickly in Hong Kong if you are travelling via the territory, and pay only HK\$100 (about £20). There have been some reports that the documents of British visitors are being checked especially assiduously by Chinese officials because of the political differences over Hong Kong.

What about flights to Hong Kong?

Air fares are generally lower to Hong Kong than direct to China. STA Travel (0171-361 6262) has a fare of £487 on Emirates via Dubai. Numerous travel agencies in Hong Kong make arrangements for China: Phoenix Services (00 852 2722 7378), based in Kowloon, will arrange tickets and accommodation in China.



Six of the best sights in Peking

The Great Wall: Not to be missed. Those with sturdy legs and knees should head for the wall at Simatai, while anyone who might need a cable-car ascent is best off at Mutianyu.

The Summer Palace: On the north-west side of Peking, the gardens are beautiful in summer and winter. On the return journey into the city, try to stop off at some of the traditional villages near the old city moat.

Mao's Mausoleum: He looks like wax, and from time to time there are reports that he is leaking, but the Chairman's body stays where it is because it would be far too politically sensitive to move him. You can stock up on tacky Mao memorabilia by the exit.

Prince Gong's Palace: An unusually quiet retreat north of the Forbidden City. The gardens are very peaceful, and the palace gives some idea of what life was like for the well-connected before 1949.

The Pearl Market: Situated on the third floor of the Hong Qiao indoor market, on the north-east corner of the Temple of Heaven. Head for a vendor called Ms Bai at stalls 113 and 123, provider of freshwater pearls and semi-precious jewellery to Mrs Thatcher (complete with framed photograph).

Chowant Antiques Market: Near the north-west corner of Ritan Park, these two warehouses offer a selection of Chinese knock-knacks, and a few real antiques. Never mind if it is a modern copy or an outright fake, just bargain very hard. (True antiques cannot be exported from China without the necessary documentation.)

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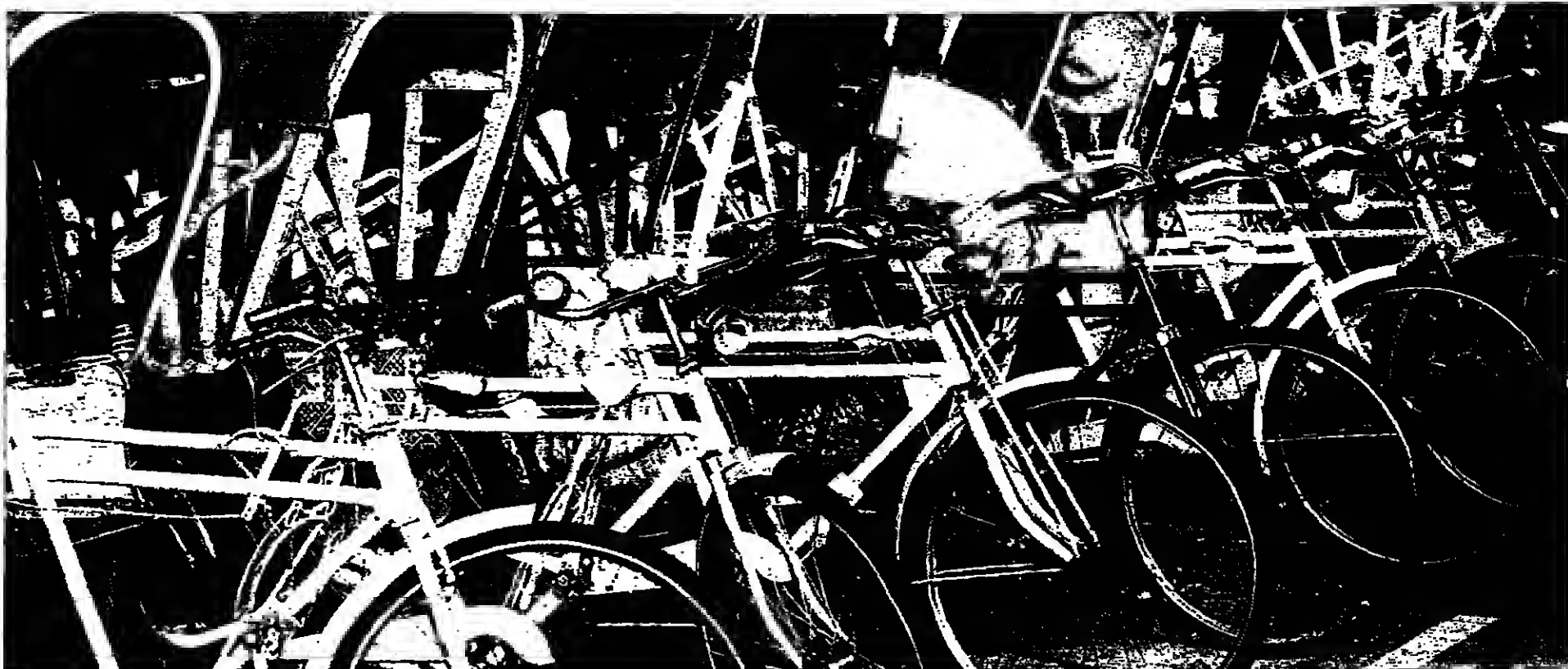
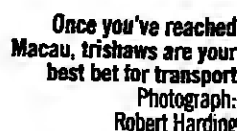
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the route that
Simon Calder took



Lo Wu, a small, swartzy settlement that would be wholly unremarkable were it not the front half of the main valve between the planet's most populous country and the rest of the world. Every few minutes, a train wheezes to a halt and disgorges hundreds more passengers. Hop over a series of official hurdles, and you suddenly find yourself ejected into the middle of a seething city. From being the cooesteed tourist a few minutes ago, you are transformed into an alien.

All the clues that you normally use to orient yourself are useless in this part of the Orient. Look for a landmark or a street name to get your bearings, and all you see is a scrabble of graceful but impenetrable Chinese characters. Even the sun shelters behind a layer of high-

At about the point on the bus ride when you guess that the broad city street must finally disengage into a country road through profoundly green fields – it accelerates into a motorway, speeding straight to Guangzhou. The route to Macau, though, slips off to the left and the town of Humen. You get tipped out of the bus into the care of another well-spoken entrepreneur, who quits his mobile phone for long enough to steer you in the direction of the town's official

Buses get a poor press compared with the praise heaped upon trains, but this one would be a contender for any collection of Great Bus Journeys of the World. Not for the vehicle itself, a rudimentary beast that had clearly done this thousands of times before. Nor for the roadside scenery, a pleasant but unexceptional collage of agriculture and activity. The thing that makes this an amazing journey is the crossing of the Pearl River. The inevitable new bridge over this three-mile

The last leg of the bus ride whisks you down the far side of the estuary, the skyline climbing

Departure from the People's Republic is smoother than arrival, allowing you to slalom rather than stutter past the bureaucracy. You emerge into a strangely familiar post-colonial cityscape, joyful to be a regular tourist once more. Never has a former Portuguese outpost felt so comforting.

You take the ferry back to Hong Kong.

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GAVIN GREEN

The British car had a wretched 100th birthday. The misguided Coventry Cathedral service was cleverly hijacked by the naked body of the environmental campaigner Lucy Pearce, shortly before she returned to an anti-road protest in Devon (by car).

Endless stories ran about how many people had been killed/maimed/poisoned by cars. A *Guardian* columnist, while admitting that most people liked their cars, said that our transport future was post-car, "in which cleaner, well-designed public transport can whisk us around and between cities". Really? And what happens if you don't live in a city? Even the right-wing *Spectator*, whose principles should be perfectly in line with car use, has started a "Not Motoring" column.

Yet of course the car will survive the next 100 years. Private transport of 2096 will, undoubtedly, be nothing like that inefficient tin box parked outside your home. That is what the anti-car brigade fail to understand: they underestimate just how much better private transport can and will get. It will, because it must.

The more rabid environmentalists argue that because private transport is highly polluting, it is best to return to what we had before: public transport, suitably modernised, supplemented by bicycles. No doubt better buses and trains, and bicycles, will play a big part. And in some areas, such as cities, perhaps they should play the only part. But does anybody seriously think British people will happily return en masse to queuing at bus stops? We had that once, and rejected it when cars became affordable.

Because people will always want private transport, so the car industry will provide it. And because people will demand it, those future cars will be clean and safe. The petrol internal combustion engine will continue to get cleaner, because it must. By the turn of the century it should even start to purify polluted inner-city air. But we'll have to wait for the wholesale use of natural gas or similar (in 15 to 20 years probably) to get massive air quality improvements. Cars will also become different from each other. Within 20 years, they will not all be boxes of steel, which nowadays differ principally in styling. Cars will come in all shapes and sizes and will be both lighter and stronger than those today, and bespoke city cars, twin- or even single-seaters, may be a feature.

To campaign against the car as an institution is a mistake. There will always be private transport, in some form. The campaign should be to make the car safer and cleaner, to revolutionise it, not to kill it.

How to get ahead in advertising

The car may be ordinary but the campaign is extraordinary. That'll be the Daewoo.
By Matthew Gwyther



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DAEWOO

In a slow market, manufacturers will try anything to sell cars. The latest "short-off-my-hack" marketing wheeze from Korean contender Daewoo is to offer 100 free vehicles to punters who can come up with the most gory tales of maltreatment at the hands of other producers. Customer care, runs Daewoo's message, is our business - we want to learn from rivals' mistakes. Our aim, it says, is to be the M&S of the car world.

Right from its launch into the UK last April, Daewoo has adopted a novel approach to shifting metal. The company organised a huge market research exercise to find 200 "guinea pigs" who would each receive a free car for a year to help Daewoo tailor its service and products. Around 180,000 hopefuls applied and each was sent a detailed questionnaire to

discover their likes and dislikes about car buying.

Car salesmen have rarely enjoyed a good press down the years - the snake in the sheepskin easing around his forecourt and off-loading his "lovely little runners" is one of the oldest stereotypes going. Even so, Daewoo's findings were spectacularly damning: customers apparently rated car salesmen "marginally higher than serial killers". Pushy, intimidating and patronising were some of the kinder adjectives. 63 per cent felt they had been worked over in a "hard sell" and 78 per cent found they had been treated worse after buying the car than when making the original decision.

It is hardly news that the weak link in keeping the customer satisfied has always been the dealers rather than those who actually make the cars.

Few cars rust or rattle any more and many look physically similar. So bow buyers are treated is fast becoming a vital point of differentiation. BMW, for example, cottoned on to this some while back.

"Most manufacturers have been pouring money into the dealer network," says Patrick Farrell, Daewoo's marketing director who was poached from Rover. "It's all persuasion and cajoling but a lot of effort has been wasted. I can remember amazing tales from my time at Rover. For example the occasion when a purchaser took a new car away with just a cup of petrol in it, went on to the motorway and ran out of fuel. He phoned the dealer who charged a £70 call out fee when he arrived with the fuel can."

To avoid any such nightmares Daewoo decided it would keep close control of the process by trying direct selling. The company ditched the idea of a franchised dealer network and set up its own permanent car supermarkets called Motor Shows and Car Centres, a highly expensive exercise. "We knew right from the start that we'd touched a nerve in the UK market," says Mr Farrell. "When you say to the average Brit that you 'cut out the middle man' it tends to work. We're very into bargains here."

Having publicly clambered aboard the customer care bandwagon with a totally unknown and untried product, Daewoo knew that it would have to provide an after-sales service second to none. Each car came with a three year warranty, three years' free servicing with home pick up and courtesy car, RAC membership, 12 months road tax, no delivery fee and a 30 day money-back offer. The only catch was that there was to be no haggling over price.

To broadcast its arrival, Daewoo hired Duckworth, Finn, Grubb, Waters, an advertising agency based in Soho, London. They came up with a quirky strategy notable for a lack of glamorous women, long shots of winding roads or tyres dramatically spitting gravel. To overcome the "Daewoo" problem it adopted the self-deprecating "biggest car company you've never heard of" slogan. The latest television effort has an elderly lady in a crash helmet running into a wall.

Daewoo was received with considerable cynicism in the trade. However, doing things in such an unconventional fashion appears to have worked. Daewoo is the most successful car launch ever, going from zero to 13,169 sales in eight months. This makes the company 17th in the

list of 43 manufacturers and already ahead of well established companies such as Mazda. Campaign, the advertising industry magazine, recently awarded Daewoo its Advertiser of the Year prize.

It's maybe as well that all the attention has been focused on how Daewoo sells its cars rather than the vehicles themselves. The two Daewoo models on offer - the Espero and Nexia - are slightly frumpy re-workings of the age-old Cavalier and Astra which have been loaded with desirable extras such as air conditioning. Daewoo make no bones about the product. "It's a bread and butter car," says Patrick Farrell. "Basic transport for people who don't care about the emotional side of motoring. Our purchasers are rational whereas a large number of new car buyers aren't."

So who has been seduced by the Daewoo message? What is the average customer profile? Charlie Dawson, the account director at Duckworth, Finn, Grubb, Waters has a pretty good idea in his mind's eye: "I suppose a teacher with two kids who is bright but not rolling in it. They don't see a car as a status symbol. Canny, careful folk maybe, but not quite as thick skinned as a Lada or Proton driver."

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money

Only when we
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'small companies'
effect a number
of times can we
be sure that it is
really about to
return to its
former glories

There are times the stock market can be a tough and demanding taskmaster. Just when you think that you have found the key to achieving above-average performance, your fail-safe method suddenly ceases to work. In economics, they have known for years about Goodhart's Law, which lays down that any economic indicator on which the authorities choose to put heavy emphasis in framing monetary policy will immediately cease to behave in its traditional manner.

But until recently, not so many people were aware that something similar applies in the stock market, too. The latest example of this phenomenon is the so-called "small companies" effect. Any finance text book will tell you how one of the "anomalies" in stock market behaviour is the tendency of small companies to outperform larger ones, even after allowing for the additional risk involved.

The reason this is an anomaly is that, according to the theory of efficient markets, it is not a phenomenon you would expect to see recurring for any length of time. If small companies consistently pro-

vided what academics call "excess returns" (ie they outperformed the market as a whole on a risk-adjusted basis), then you would expect supply and demand to see to it that this did not last. The flock of buyers into the sector would push prices up and lead to smaller companies being valued more highly—until the scope for outperformance had in effect disappeared.

So much for the theory, which can be best summed up in its vernacular form as "there is no such thing as a free lunch in the stock market". The reason it is worth recalling now is that the small company effect, which was an observable phenomenon, seems to have disappeared in the last few years.

The evidence for this comes from Hoare Govett's *Smaller Companies Index*, a review of the way that the smallest quoted companies on the London Stock Exchange perform over time. It has been compiled for a number of years by two highly regarded academics at London Business School, Elroy Dimson and Paul Marsh. Their latest annual review of the index's performance was published this week.



JONATHAN DAVIS
INVESTMENTS

What it shows is that the smaller companies effect is now in full-scale retreat. In the 41 years since 1955, when the data series began, the *Smaller Companies Index* has outperformed the *All-Share Index* 29 times, frequently by a handsome margin. The cumulative excess return over the whole period is just under 4 per cent per annum. The figures are: *All-Share*—annualised total return from 1955 to 1995 inclusive 14.2 per cent; *Smaller Companies*—18 per cent. To provide a statistically fair comparison, the figures

combine capital gains and dividend income, which is assumed to have been reinvested.

But the experience of recent years has been very different. The stock-brokers Hoare Govett started to publish the index on a regular basis in the mid-1980s. For a while all went well. Smaller companies continued to outperform in 1987 and 1988. But in the next four years smaller companies underperformed bigger rivals, and while 1993 was a good year for the minnows, last year was one of the worst of all time. The total return on smaller companies in last year's bull market was nearly 10 per cent below that achieved by the *All-Share Index*.

Just as interesting is what has happened to the volatility of smaller company shares. Volatility, the extent to which prices fluctuate around their long-term average, is a measure of risk. Over the whole period 1955 to 1995, smaller companies not only outperformed their bigger brethren, but did so without involving investors in any significant extra risk. In fact, they were if anything less volatile. As long as investors hold a diversified portfolio

of small company shares, the smaller company sector held out the promise of the investor's Holy Grail: higher return for lower risk.

But even that part of the story seems to be losing its lustre. The volatility of the smaller company index has also increased, to the point where it is marginally more volatile than the *All-Share Index*. So now the prospectus seems to be: a lower return and higher risk. That, if it turns out to be new trend, is hardly the most appealing of combinations.

Spare a thought too for all the fund management companies that have launched unit trusts and investment trusts to cash in on the "small companies effect". They must be cursing the market's fickleness, although they cannot be entirely surprised at the turn of events. The fact that the effect has become so well known must be, as efficient markets theory suggests, one of the reasons it no longer works. Another explanation is that smaller companies are better researched and easier to trade than they were years ago.

But before anyone gets too gloomy, it is worth keeping the

business in perspective. All such statistical exercises are just that. The composition of the smaller companies index has changed dramatically over the years, reflecting changes in our corporate landscape, so comparisons need to be treated with care. The arrival of the privatised utilities, for example, has tilted the performance scales towards larger companies. The smaller companies index is also relatively top-heavy in sectors such as property and construction, which have struggled.

In other words, it is not difficult to find explanations for the reversal of fortune. Reading between the lines of Dimson and Marsh's latest offering, it is possible to deduce that one bright spark for the sector may be the prospect of takeover activity. The current wave of bids and deals has been largely confined to bigger companies. History suggests it may be the smaller companies' turn next.

But the main worry about the "small companies effect" must be that its disappearance is not widely enough known. Only when we have read its obituary several times can we be sure that it is finally about to return to its former glories.

The grand-daddy of all pensions

Should everybody in work be made to contribute to a national pension scheme? By James Patterson

Every person in work, whether employed or self-employed, earning above a minimum weekly amount, will be required by law to contribute to a national pension scheme, unless they are already a member of an occupational pension scheme or are paying at least equivalent contributions into a personal pension.

This is one of the important recommendations published this week by the Retirement Income Inquiry—an independent body sponsored by the National Association of Pension Funds, which for the past two years has been reviewing pension provision in the UK.

It has received a cautious welcome from both sides of the political fence, but could well cause a storm when the implications for individuals and employers are fully understood.

The scheme would rapidly replace Serps, the cost of which falls largely on the taxpayer. But the prospects of a third compulsory deduction from pay packets on top of income tax and National Insurance may well be unpopular with individuals who presently rely entirely on state pensions.

Contributions would be 4.8 per cent of earnings—the present Serps rebate—between an upper and lower limit on earnings and be split between employee and employer in the case of the employed. But the inquiry also recommends that this contribution rate should be progressively increased to reach a more realistic rate that would provide an adequate pension. A contribution

rate of at least 10 per cent of earnings has been put forward as the minimum rate required if individuals are to receive a pension of 50 per cent of earnings. An additional contribution of up to 0.7 per cent of earnings would also be needed to fund the transition period while Serps was being phased out.

Individuals could still contribute to personal pension schemes but the national pension scheme could well reduce the role of portable schemes because few employers contribute to employees' personal pension schemes but they would be compelled to contribute to the national scheme.

Contributions paid by each individual would be invested in a variety of assets, mainly equities, accumulated in separate individual funds until retirement when the accumulated value would be used to buy an annuity to provide the pension for the individual.

As with portable pension schemes, the ultimate pension received by individuals from the proposed national pension scheme cannot be guaranteed. The amount will depend on how successful the trustees are in investing the assets (presumably the investment management will be delegated to professionals if only to avoid problems with the Financial Services Act) and annuity rates at the time of retirement, over which trustees have no control.

This is in contrast to Serps and company pension schemes, where the pension ultimately received depends only on an individual's earnings during his or her

working life and is therefore independent of stock market/property market performance and of interest rates.

The pitfalls in a scheme dependent on investment performance are many and often unseen until too late. The ultimate pension received by individuals in similar circumstances will vary simply because investment returns were different over their working lives and, equally important, annuity rates were different when the pension was bought.

The objections to the national pension scheme from individuals could well include being made to save towards their pension, particularly if the contribution rate is high and they are under financial pressure such as meeting mortgage commitments, having no control over the investment of those contributions and experiencing a fall in value when the equity market falls, and being utterly confused over buying the annuity at retirement. Men may object to women receiving equal annuities because women live longer than men.

If the ultimate pension from the national pension scheme turns out to be low at a particular time because of adverse investment performance and/or low annuity rate, there is almost certain to be a massive outcry to make up those pensions from the public purse.

Finally, the inquiry is proposing to end payment of tax-free cash sums from pension arrangements—a logical proposal, but in itself certain to ensure total hostility by the public.

This scheme will do nothing for exist-

ing pensioners on low pensions. The inquiry proposes therefore that there should be a first-tier assured pension equal to the present basic state pension plus a top-up pension to bring the total to a minimum of 20 per cent of national average earnings. This would represent the absolute minimum pension payable.

The basic element of this pension would be paid to all. But the top-up would be means-tested and progressively cut the higher an individual's overall income (capital would be ignored). This proposal may meet equally violent opposition on the grounds of means-testing, though everyone would have to provide income details before receiving the pension. Any reduction on the top-up will also upset people who claim that, because they have paid the full National Insurance contributions, they are entitled to the full pension from the state. Assured pensions will also mean substantially higher National Insurance contributions.

Someone, however, has to grasp the nettle and educate the public in the basic lesson that nobody can repeal or change the laws of economics. Higher pensions can only be paid for by the working population whether through higher taxes, or accepting lower earnings so that equity dividends can be increased to pay pensions, or both. The alternative is lower benefits.

Many countries are finding this a very difficult message to get across to a hostile public. But it has got to be done, and the sooner the better.



Pension-bound: The idea of compulsory national scheme has won a cautious welcome from both sides of politics



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Best borrowing rates

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max adv %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption penalty
MORTGAGES					
Fixed rates					
Hickley & Rugby	0800 774499	0.50 to 1/2/97	70	£250	3 yrs unemployment ins
1st Mortgage Soc	0800 080088	6.99 to 1/3/01	75	£275	1st 5 yrs: indiv determined
Variable rates					
Scarbrough BS	0800 590547	1.09 for 1 year	95	—	To 1/3/01: 6 mths interest
First time buyers fixed rates					
Halifax BS	01422 333333	3.99 to 30/4/98	90	—	1st 5 yrs: rebate reclaimed & 6.1% of sum repaid
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	4.44 to 1/5/99	95	—	To 30/4/01: 7% of advance
First time buyers variable rates					
Bristol & West BS	0800 100117	0.95 to 31/1/97	90	£275	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	5.99 to 1/3/99	95	£295	To 31/1/01: 9/8/6 mths int
First time buyers variable rates					
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	1.19 to 1/5/97	90	—	1st 6 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
Merchandise BS	0191 295 9550	4.24 to 1/4/98	90	£195	Refund valuation fee

Telephone	APR	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)
Unsecured		
Direct Line	0141 248 9966	14.90E
Midland Bank	0800 180180	15.40
Secured (second charge)		
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	8.60
Royal Bank of Scotland	Via branch	9.30

Telephone	Account	Authorized % pm	Unauthorized % pm	APR
OVERDRAFTS				
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76	9.5
Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 959595	Alliance	0.76	9.5

Telephone	Card	Min income	Rate % pm	APR %	Annual fee
CREDIT CARDS					
Standard					
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.94G	11.80
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 151616	MasterCard	—	1.14	14.50
Gold cards					
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.5208M	10.80
Royal Bank of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05	14.50

Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods
STORE CARDS		
John Lewis	Via store	—
Arks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.87A

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Best savings rates

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS					
Portman BS	01202 292444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	4.80
Teachers BS	0800 378669	Instant	Instant	£500	5.55
Co-operative Bank	0345 253000	Instant	Instant	£5,000	5.37

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
Britannia BS	01538 392808	Capital Trust	Postal	£2,000	5.15
Bristol & West BS	0800 303330	Direct Savings	Postal	£5,000	5.75
Bristol & West BS	0800 303330	Direct Savings	Postal	£10,000	5.80

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
C&G	0500 246810	Direct 30	30 day P	£1,000	6.50
C&G	0500 246810	Direct 30	30 day P	£10,000	6.75
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Postal 120	120 day P	£25,000	7.20

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
MONTHLY INTEREST					
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	5.37
C&G	0500 246810	Direct 30	30 day P	£10,000	6.31
C&G	0500 246810	Direct 30	30 day P	£10,000	6.55

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
FIXED RATE BONDS					
West Bromwich BS	0990 143668	Guaranteed Growth	31/1/97	£5,000	6.80F
Frizzell Bank	0800 373191	Fixed Rate	2 yr bond	£2,500	6.75F
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0113 245 9911	3 Way Bond	4 yr bond	£5,000	6.80F

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS					
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	Higher Rate Deposit	Instant	£1,000	5.25
Kleinwort Benson	01202 502404	Alliance	Instant	£2,500	5.50
Alliance & Leicester BS	0116 271 7272	Alliance	Instant	£3,000	5.00
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Current A/C Gold	Instant	£10,000	5.27

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)					
Financial Assurance	0181 380 3388	1 year	£5,000	4.50FN	Year
Financial Assurance	0181 380 3388	2 year	£5,000	4.80FN	Year
Pinnacle Insurance	0161 207 9007	5 year	£3,000	6.20FN	Year

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
OFFSHORE (gross)					
Newcastle Bank, Gibraltar	00 350 76188	Nova Access	Instant	£5,000	6.10
Portman CI Ltd	01481 822747	Gold Plus	90 day	£5,000	6.45
Bham Midshires, Guern	01481 700680	Fixed Account	31.1.99	£5,000	7.25F

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
NATIONAL SAVINGS					
Investment Account		1 month	£20	£20	5.25
			£500	£500	5.75
			£25,000	£25,000	6.00
			£2,000	£2,000	6.50
			£25,000	£25,000	6.75
			£100	£100	6.65 F
			£1,000	£1,000	6.25 F
			£20,000	£20,000	6.50 F
			£500	£500	7.00 F

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
Capital Bond					
First Option Bond		Series 1	5 year	£100	6.65 F
			12 month	£1,000	6.25 F
				£20,000	6.50 F
				£500	7.00 F
Pensioner's Guaranteed Income Bond					
NS Certificates (tax-free)		Series 3	5 year	£100	5.35 F
43rd issue			5 year	£100	2.50 + RPI
9th Index linked			5 year	£100	2.50 + RPI
Children's Bond		Issue H	5 year	£25	6.75 F

All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice. MONEYFACTS 01832 500677. 26 January 1996

FEAR OF FINANCE
Clifford German

It is generally a bad sign when no one wants money, and no one seems to want to pay for it at the moment. In the last six months expectations have swung from an imminent increase to further falls in base rates. Building societies in particular are again shaving mortgage rates, especially on fixed-rate loans, simply to try to get their money out on loan before rates fall further. Some of the societies targeted by speculators opening accounts are stuffed with cash they cannot use in their mortgage business.

Banks and building societies are busy cutting rates on deposit accounts and the rush to put rollover money into fixed-rate Tessa has been so heavy that the best offers have been able to replace their offers with lower rates.

Rates on guaranteed annual and monthly income bonds have also dropped perceptibly in the past week alone, and savers who were grumbling about the poor returns on their money last year will be even more disgruntled now. The benefits promised to savers from a reduction in the tax rate on interest and dividends from 25 per cent to 20 per cent from April has already been eaten up.

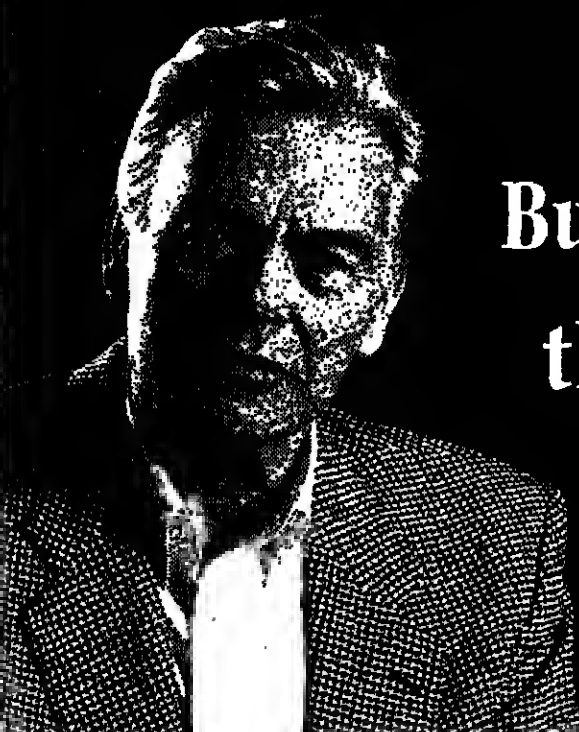
Even the National Savings movement is in on the act. The demand for Pensioners' Bonds paying fixed returns for five years has been so brisk since the Chancellor cut the age qualification from 65 to 60 in the Budget that he has been able to cut the return on future sales from 7.5 per cent to 7 per cent.

There is also no doubt that the Treasury will save money as a result of the reshuffle to Premium Bonds and prizes. Although the public is invited to focus on the fact that the number of £1m prizes is not being reduced, the fact is the total prize fund is being cut from 5.2 per cent to 4.75 per cent of the money in the pool.

There is, of course, no guarantee that rates will not rise again within the five-year time-frame of most fixed-rate offers, and for savers the message is clear. The rewards for taking a given amount of risk by investing in fixed-interest securities, unit trusts, investment trusts and shares, especially inside a tax-free PEP package, are on the increase.

Interest rates in the UK after deducting inflation have been uncomfortably high for years but a fall in demand for credit is almost always a bad sign. Even the brisk demand for consumer credit does not seem to have done much for retail trade so far.

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Fund Manager	Entry charge	Exit charge	Annual charge	Charge after 5 years
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Virgin	0%	0%	1.00%	£300
Morgan Grenfell	3.00%	0%	0.75%	£398
Lloyds Bank	6.00%	0%	1.00%	£642

Figures taken from a selection of other tracking PEPs. Figures based on Fidelity's research as at 15.1.96. It is assumed that there is no capital growth.

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Sources: *Microcap, UK investment trust capital growth sector, mid price to mid price, net income reinvested from 25.4.94 to 29.12.95. Schroder UK Growth Fund plc 1st out of 8.
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money

New plans to care for the elderly are unlikely to keep the wolf from your door

By Clifford German

The consultation document on the future of long-term care for the elderly announced by the Chancellor in the last Budget is likely to be published by Easter. But the proposals are unlikely to take effect before April 1997 at the earliest, and any hopes they will guarantee comfortable middle-class families against the need to sell their parental homes to pay for care are likely to be dashed.

The proposed partnership between private insurers and the state to underwrite the cost of care in a nursing home is likely to be targeted firmly at families with assets of up to £60,000, including the family home, who cannot be expected to buy long-term care insurance from their own resources.

The two front-running schemes which the Department of Health and experts on long-term care in the insurance industry are studying are versions of the dollar-for-dollar guarantee – as used in several American states, notably Connecticut – and the time limit scheme that operates in New York state.

Dollar-for-dollar schemes work on the basis that individuals who buy, say, \$50,000 worth of private insurance protection will be able to ring-fence that amount of assets and claim support from the state once they have used the proceeds of their insurance and run their own assets down to

that figure. Time limit schemes require individuals to insure their care costs in full for a specific period, three years in New York, after which the state will take over the full cost of further care indefinitely.

Oliver Heald, a junior minister at the DSS, went to the US last month to study the respective schemes, leading figures in the private health-care insurance business are being consulted and a briefing paper is being prepared for circulation to all MPs.

Peter Gatenby, appointed actuary at PPP Lifetime Care, the market leader in the infant private long-term care insurance market, believes the approved UK scheme will combine the characteristics of the two US versions.

Individuals who take out a private health-care policy plan could buy basic cover for a minimum period in a nursing home, and that would entitle them, once the policy had been exhausted, to claim support from the state or local authority as soon as their own savings had been run down to the guaranteed level.

The average stay in a nursing home is only two or three years, but the state guarantee would allow insurance companies to reduce significantly the premiums on private policies and make private insurance more affordable.

The protection would be additional to the existing level of protected assets which

will double to £16,000 in April this year. But in order to keep down the cost of the safety net to the taxpayer, state support would be means-tested and the qualifying level at which individuals could claim from the state would be capped at around £60,000 of assets.

That level will be chosen to represent the value of the average house. Investors with larger assets would not be eligible for the support on the grounds that they could afford their own policies or their own care costs.

The consultation document will offer any tax concessions to policyholders to help them pay their policy premiums, and the industry recognises that very few of the individuals who are likely to need long-term health-care insurance can easily afford it. In the past five years only around 9,000 policies have been sold, two thirds of them by PPP.

Premiums on existing long-term care policies are substantial. For £1,000 a month of support indexed for up to 5 per cent annual inflation, a male aged 45 would pay a lump sum of £6,436, or £30 a month, until a claim is made; for a woman the cost would be £11,310, or £36 a month. At 60 a man would pay £8,695, or £53 a month, a woman £14,640, or £62 a month; and at 80 a man would have to pay £11,383, or £50 a month, and a woman £17,500, or

£245 a month. And claims are only triggered by medical need. Even with state backing the cost of insurance, especially for the 50- and 60-year-olds – whose need is the most immediate – will run into several thousand pounds.

For most individuals who will qualify for the state partnership scheme their homes are their only significant assets apart from a pension. In order to fund a wider take-up of private long-term care policies it may still be necessary for many individuals to earmark their pension lump sum or take out an equity release scheme that will require them to surrender some of the equity in their home to buy a policy.

Even if the outline of the Government's proposals are published within weeks and win largely bi-partisan support in the House of Commons, there is a real possibility that legislation could be overtaken by an election and delayed another two years.

Since time is of the essence in taking out insurance policies – and premiums escalate sharply the older the individual is when the policy is taken out – PPP Lifetime Care is actively marketing policies with a guarantee that if the rules are changed to reflect the introduction of Government support their premiums will be amended, or they will be allowed to switch to a more appropriate product.

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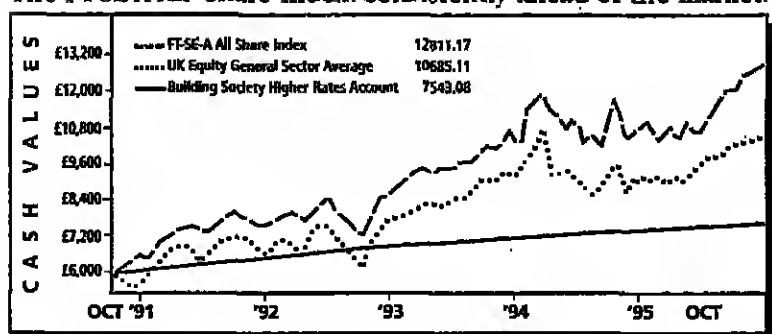
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Mortgage rates are edging down again, with widespread reductions in fixed rates and discount rates and a few variable rates. Bradford & Bingley is pioneering the fight-back by mutual building societies by cutting standard variable mortgage rates to a market-leading 7.24 per cent from 1 March and simultaneously raising savings rates to an average 0.5 per cent above equivalent rates from Halifax and Abbey National.

Alliance & Leicester has introduced new cheaper fixed-rate mortgages for one, two, three and five-year periods. The one-year rate is 1.95 per cent for up to 95 per cent of loan to value. Redemption fees of six months' interest will be charged if the one, two and three-year mortgages are redeemed before February 2001, and the five-year before 2002.

Northern Rock is launching a new two-year fixed rate mortgage at 3.99 per cent, or 5.99 per cent fixed for three years, a 6.25 discount on the standard variable rate of 7.44 per cent for one year or a 3 per cent discount for two years, all with redemption penalties of 5 per cent during the first six years. A 6 per cent cash-back is available on a variable rate mortgage of 7.19 per cent with a 6 per cent penalty for redemption in the first six years.

First Mortgage is launching a new five-year fixed rate mortgage at 6.99 per cent for loans up to 75 per cent of valuation, available until 16 February. A booking fee of £275 is charged and a six-month interest penalty is charged for redemption within the five years.

Britannia BS is offering first-time buyers a one-year discount of 2.75 per cent plus a 3 per cent cash-back up to £6,000, a refund of valuation fee up to £400 and free unemployment protection insurance for a year. Britannia BS and Winterthur Life are offering a two-year fixed rate of 5.99 per cent for mortgages up to 95 per cent of valuation, with free valuation, no legal fees and a four-week completion period.

General Accident Life has extended the availability of its package of Flexi Mortgages, based on Newcastle BS products, which range from a 5 per cent cash-back and no discount to a 5 per cent discount and no cash-back.

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Scandinavia is hot. For the moment

Consistent growth is making Finland, Sweden and Norway look impressive. By Alison Eadie

Morgan Grenfell's European Growth Trust has a somewhat freewheeling approach to investment. It does not try to outperform stock market indices, but looks for value wherever it can be found on the Continent and, now and then, in the UK.

The result has been impressive. The £640m fund, a unit trust that can be invested in a PEP, has outperformed its peers since it was launched in 1988, according to Mitrupal.

It is first in the European sector over the last five years and second over one year, behind Europa, Morgan Grenfell's European small companies fund.

The search for value means whole countries and sectors can be in or out of favour. At the moment Scandinavia is in, particularly Finland. A hefty 40 per cent of the fund is invested in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Peter Young, manager of European Growth, says good-quality, non-cyclical growth companies in Finland are selling at prices of only seven to eight times this year's expected earnings. Cyclical stocks such as paper are selling on only five times this year's earnings. By contrast German stocks are selling on 15 times 1996 earnings and French stocks on 13.5 times.

Although Mr Young accepts that German and French stocks are better value than they were – their price-earnings ratios are usually higher – he is wary. For the past year, the fund has held only two stocks in Germany. Its total holdings presently number 65 and 80 is the maximum.

The fund's flexibility is its strength. Mr Young points out that European stock markets are not as developed as those in the UK and US, and information flow is a much more hit-and-miss affair. There are therefore bigger anomalies to be found in valuations of companies.

Fundamental research and company visits are the cornerstone of European Growth's approach. Although information is not automatically dished out, as in the UK, through ever more frequent trading statements, it can still be ferreted out.

Mr Young says Continental companies often give large shareholders information that UK companies would not divulge. Their interpretation of insider trading laws and the need to treat all investors equally is different. Instead

of the UK approach that all shareholders must be told if one is told, Continentals will answer directly to the questioner but feel no obligation to inform the rest. If anyone else were to ask, they would also be told.

The advantage of superior knowledge means there is a temptation to overweight the fund when the opportunities look good. To minimise the price risk, no more than 30 per cent of assets are allocated to one country and no more than 8 per cent to one stock, says Mr Young.

Only two holdings are allowed to reach the 8 per cent ceiling and both must be easily tradable. As with countries, the fund dips in and out of sectors. It has virtually nothing in the consumer sector at the moment and very little in oil other than a couple of Russian stocks. Two years ago it was heavily weighted in luxury goods and now has a high proportion of computer and high-tech stocks.

Mr Young explains: "As a house we don't like funds with restricted mandates. We like the fund manager to roam, to find value."

High-tech favourites include the Finnish telecommunications company Nokia – one of the 8 per cent stocks – and German software company SAP.

The fund topped up on its Nokia holdings when the price recently halved from its peak, and even at prevailing prices is showing a fivefold gain on the purchase price.

SAP has similarly suffered a share-price bashing after one quarter's bad results. Mr Young points out: "We are in a good position to buy when panic selling sets in as we know the companies so well." SAP's shares, despite their setback, have increased tenfold since the fund first bought them.

Finding value can mean smallish holdings suddenly become very big ones. Mr Young this month found himself selling a large chunk of British Biotech, the fund's only UK holding, even though he believes the share price will continue heading north.

Having bought at an average price of £5 a share, the fund took profits at close to £8.

The spectacular and sudden rise in price meant British Biotech represented 13 per cent of the fund's assets. This is against unit trust (10 per cent maximum per stock) and Morgan Grenfell's own rules, so the holding was trimmed to 5 per cent of assets.

Mr Young dismisses fears that its price rise has been overdone. "Forget where it has been," he cautions. "Investment must always be forward-looking."

As well as successes, there have been disappointments. EVC (European Vinyls Corporation), the joint venture between ICI and Enichem that floated on the Amsterdam stock market in November 1994, has not lived up to expectations. It is presently trading around 50 guilders against an issue price of 77 guilders.

European Growth's eclectic style does not lend itself to narrow specialisms. As a result Morgan Grenfell's 14-strong European team are all generalists. The approach is helpful in controlling risk, says Mr Young.

There is no over-dependency on one person and investment decisions are subject to peer review rather than review by a senior person who may not know the markets as well.

Valuation methods involve looking at balance sheets, free cash flows, price-earnings ratios and other standard analytical tools. Much hangs on whether management is telling a believable story, says Mr Young.

The outlook for European investment is reasonably healthy, he believes. Despite the slowdown of the last quarter, there is scope for earnings growth this year.

Although there is theoretically plenty of scope for cost-cutting in European companies, Mr Young warns against expecting too much. The strength of social consensus will ensure that employees continue to enjoy a sizeable share of corporate wealth.

"It is almost impossible to exaggerate the degree of cultural difference between the US and parts of Europe. A lot of potential value will never go to shareholders," says Mr Young. This is more true of bigger, older industries, such as metal-bashing, than newer industries such as computers, he adds.

Scandinavia remains the favourite investment market, but the fund will continue to pick and choose in several markets.

Mr Young sees no difficulty with the fund growing in size. "We still have more good ideas than cash to invest."

European Growth Trust Morgan Grenfell Asset Management, 20 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 1UT. Telephone: 0171-588 7171



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When one door opens, another closes

Investors in Tessa need nimble wits and quick reflexes to catch the best offers

Northern Rock has closed its fixed rate follow-up Tessa account paying 7.64 per cent, but the variable rate account paying 8 per cent on the maximum £9,000, 7.5 per cent on other balances down to £3,000 remains available.

West Bromwich Building Society has withdrawn its follow-up Tessa offering 7.55 per cent fixed for the next five years "following unprecedented demand", and replaced it with a 7.35 per cent fixed rate.

The West Brom claims this

remains the best fixed-rate Tessa available, topping 7.30 per cent at Yorkshire Building Society and Bradford & Bingley, 7.22 per cent at the TSB and 7 per cent at Barclays Bank.

Leeds & Holbeck BS has launched an escalator Tessa for maturing £9,000 Tessas. It will pay 6 per cent in the first year rising to 6.2 per cent in year two, 6.5 per cent in year three, 7.2 per cent in year four and 9 per cent in the final year.

Ipswich Building Society has increased its rates for

maturing Tessas to 7.25 per cent for existing customers, 7 per cent for transfers from other providers.

Alliance & Leicester has introduced two new investment accounts, which do not qualify for membership of the society, to replace qualifying accounts withdrawn last week.

Prime 90 Deposit account will pay 4.1 per cent on amounts from £1,000 to £5,000, 6.1 per cent up to £10,000 and 6.60 per cent up to £25,000. The Tessa deposit account pays 6.1 per cent (variable) on amounts be-

tween £500 and £3,000, 6.20 per cent up to £4,800 and 7.25 per cent on the maximum £9,000 rollover account.

Skipton Building Society has increased the minimum investment needed to open a share account which makes the investor a voting member of the society to £2,500.

"This is one decision the society would have preferred not to make, but we have a business to run," Skipton's chief executive, John Goodfellow, said. "The society has no intention to convert or be acquired."

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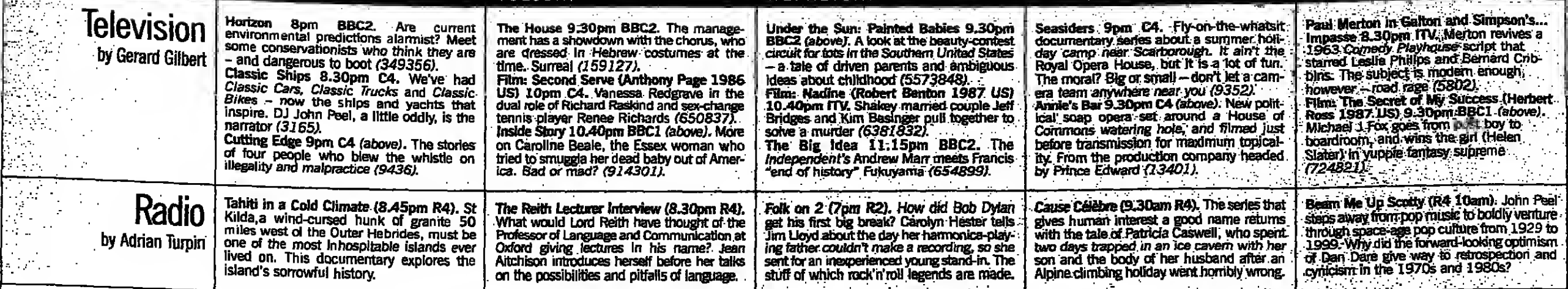
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SCOTTISH WIDOWS



BBC 1

BBC 2

ITV/London

Channel 4

ITV/Regions

[illegible]

Radio

Radio 1
7.01AM: *Radio 1*
7.05am Kevin Green on Sunday
7.10am David 2.00 Soul on Sunday
4.00 UK Top 40 7.00 Signs of the
Times 8.00 Radio 1 Rock Show
10.00 Andy Kershaw 12.00 Alastair
Whitehead 4.00-6.00am Clive
Warren

Radio 2
7.00AM-5.20PM *Radio 2*
7.05am Don Maclean 9.05
Michael Aspel 10.30 Hayes on
Sunday 12.00 Desmond Carington
2.00 Benny Green 3.30 David
Jacobs 4.00 Those Beautiful
Balled Years 4.30 Sing Something
Simple 5.00 Frank Topping 7.00
Jeffrey Archer 8.30 Sunday Half
Hour 9.00 Keith 10.00 Talk
In 7.00am 12.25 Steve Madden
3.00 - 7.00am Alex Lester

Radio 3
6.00-2.45PM *Radio 3*
7.00am: 7.00 Sacred
7.05 Choice and Profane
8.55 Choice of Three, With world
music specialist Jo Shinner.
9.00 Brian Kay's Sunday Morning
Rossini: Overture The Thieving
Magician; Pachelbel: Canon
and Gigue; Purcell: Morning Hymn;
Evaning Hymn. Breitl: Als ich
einem Sonntagmorgen frau Minor.
Cello: Three Dances. Kreisler, arr.
Rachmann:ino. Liebesleid;
Liedesdorf, Allegro: Misere.
Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on
Taverniers: L'Orfeo (excerpts). Com-
posers: L'Orfeo. L'Orfeo. L'Orfeo.
Brahms: Schicksalslied. Schubert:
Grand March in E flat (D919 No 1).
Dowland: Lachrimae coactae,
Lachrimae amarae. Beethoven:
Symphony No 4 in A flat.
12.15 Music Matters.
1.00 News: From the Proms
1.15 News: Heinrich Schütz (cello),
Johann Sebastian Bach/Wolfgang
Sawallisch, Wagner: Overture:
Das Liebesverbot; Hindemith:
Cello Concerto. Strauss: Ein
Heidenleben.
2.30 The Sound of the Age: The Sound
of Signs. (2/2).
3.30 Harewood House Concert.
Marie McLaughlin (soprano) and
Malcolm Mariner (piano) and
James and Brian by Cavalli,
Schubert: Wolf, Faure and
Rossini. (2/2).
5.05 The BBC Orchestras. BBC
Scottish Symphony Orchestra/
Jorge Markensky, Philip Fowke
and the Chachaturian: Piano



In **Taking Notes** (10pm), a R2 Arts Programme special, Adam Sweeting of the *Guardian* investigates the history of pop-music writing. In the early Sixties, it consisted of little more than rehashing record company press releases. Since then it has become possibly the most influential form of journalism in Britain.

5.45 The Sunday Feature: Orlando and Friends.
6.30 City of London Sinfonia.
 Back: Brandenburg Concerto No 6 in G flat, Hindemith: Five Pieces, Op 44, Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No 2 in F.
7.30 The Sunday Play: *A View to a Haunt*.
9.35 Chris Worlock. Brian Wright introduces Boris's sacred trilogy *Christ's Childhood*.
11.15-12.30am Record Review.

Radio 4
02.45-4.55am *RA, 1584H, 101*
6.00am News Briefing.
6.15am Something Understood.
6.55 Weather.
7.00 News.
7.10 Sunday Papers.
7.15 On Your Farm.
7.30 The Week's Good Cause.
8.55 Weather.
9.00 News.
9.10 Sunday Papers.
9.15 Letter from America.
9.30 Morning Service.
10.15 The Archers.
11.15 Midlurmwave.
11.45 Sentimental Journey. (2/5).
12.15 Desert Island Discs.
1.00 News.
1.00 The World This Weekend.
1.55 Shipping Forecast.
2.00 Gardeners' Question Time.
2.30 Classic Series: Sunset Song.
3.00 Pick of the Week.
4.15 Asia Gold.
5.00 News; Crimscapes, (4/6).
5.30 Poetry Please!
5.50 Shipping Forecast.
5.55 Weather.
6.00 Six O'Clock News.
6.15 Feedback.
6.30 In Search of the National Interest.
7.00 Chris's BBC Radio 4: *Tales from the Perilous Realm*.
7.30 A Good Read.
8.00 (FM) The Natural History Programme.
8.30 (FM) Suenos - World Spanish.
8.50 (FM) What's This History.
9.00 (FM) The French Connection.
9.00 (FM) First Person Plural.
9.15 (FM) Short Stories in Spanish.

9.30 (FM) Flashpoints.
9.30 (JW) Winter's Weekly.
10.00 News.
10.15 Medicine Now.
10.45 The Final Frontier.
11.15 Community.
11.45 Seeds of Faith. (1/6).
12.00 News.
12.30 The Late Story: From Marrakech.
1.48 Shipping Forecast.
1.00 As World Service.

Radio 5
103.1, 93.8MHz
6.05am Straight Up 6.30 Brian
 Hudson 6.55 Sunday
 with Mair 11.35 Special Assign-
 ment 12.00 Midday Edition 12.15
 The Big Bye 1.05 Baker and Kelly
 2.05 From 2.30 Gary Linerick's Sun-
 day Sport 3.05 From 3.15 The Doc
 7.00 News Extra 7.35 The Acid
 Test 8.05 Taking Drugs Seriously
 8.35 Asian Perspective 9.00 Dailyn
 Worldwide 10.05 Out This Week
 10.35 Crime Desk 11.05 Super-
 heroes 11.45 All Night 5.00-
 6.00am Morning Reports

Classic FM
100.0 (H), 98.8MHz
6.00am Brian Lucas 9.00 Classic
 Romance 12.00 Celebrity Choice
 1.00 Alan Mann 3.00 Masterclass.
 4.00 Robert Booth 7.00 Book
 Browse 8.00 Classic FM Evening
 Club 10.00 Howard's Week
 12.00 Andre Lane 4.00-6.00am
 Mark Griffiths.

Virginio Radio
127.5, 137.1, 162.0MHz (H), 105.5MHz
6.00am Jeremy Lee Gough 10.00
 Paul Coyte 2.00 Nicky Home 6.00
 Mitch Johnson 10.00 Gary Davis
 2.00-6.00am Robin Banks

World Service
7.58MHz
1.00 World News 1.10 Press Review
 1.15 Red Dwarf 1.30 Anything Goes
 2.00 Newsway 2.30 Composer of the
 Month 2.50 World News 3.15 Sports
 Report 3.30 Jazz for the Asking
 4.00 Newswest 4.30 Off the
 Firecracker's Creek 4.45 Red Dwarf
 5.00 Newsway 5.30 Andy Nershan

Satellite

[illegible]

Pastimes

Chess William Har

Vladimir Kramnik and Vassily Ivanchuk have proven themselves as good as anyone in tournament play, but both disappointed me last time in the world championship qualifying matches, when Gata Kamsky and Viswanathan Anand won through.

And then there is Alexei Shirov. In a class of his own when it comes to raw imagination, Shirov — or Planet Shirov as he is respectfully known by his peers — is quite the most spectacular player around. Try this game for size, from the current tournament in Wijk aan Zee.

White sacrificed a piece in the opening, won it back

Bridge Alan Hiron

Love all; dealer East

	North	
	♠QJ	
	♥A 10 8 6 4	
	♦AJ 3	
	♣9 7 5	
West		East
♠A 4 3		♥K 2
♥Q 7 5		♦K J 9 3
♦10 9 8 7 6 2		♠K
♣2		♥AQ 10 8 6 4
	South	
	♠10 9 8 7 6 5	
	♥2	
	♦Q 5 4	
	♣K J 3	

Speculative doubles can pay unexpected dividends. As Leon Baron once wrote: "If you

Perplexity

with the unlikely 28.Bd8! and still had enough left for a mating attack in the endgame, with even his king making a contribution.

White: Alexei Shirov

Black: Boris Gelfand

1 e4 e5	2 Qg4 b5
2 Nf3 d6	3 Nf6+ Ke7
3 d4 cxd4	4 0-0-0 Qx7
4 Nxd4 Nf6	25 Ngx4+ Kf8
5 Nc3 a6	26 Bh6+ Ke7
6 Be3 e6	27 Bg5+ Kf8
7 g4 e5	28 Bx6 Bx5
8 Nf5 g6	29 Bx7 Nc6
9 g5 gx5	30 Nh6 Bg6
10 c5 d5	31 Rd6 Nb4
11 gx6 d4	32 cxb4 Kc7
12 Be4 Qc8	33 h4 Rxb8
13 Nd5 Qc6	34 Bx7c7+
14 Bxd4 Bb4+	35 Kd2 Be4
15 c5 Qx4	36 Rg1+ Kh8
16 Be3 Ba5	37 Kc3 Bb7
17 Nf6+ Ke7	38 Rgd1 Re8
18 Nd5+ Ke8	39 Nf5 Be8
19 Nf6+ Ke7	40 Rd8 Bx5
20 Bc7 B7	41 Rxexd+ Kc7
21 Nd4+ Ke8	42 Rx5-1-0

don't sometimes double opponents unsuccessfully, you are not doubling enough."

The bidding needs some explanation: East opened 2♣ (showing, in a modified Precision Club System, 11-13 points—the singleton ♦K was hardly full value—exactly four hearts and at least five clubs). South overcalled with 2♠. West passed and North clearly expecting more for a Two-level overall, raised to 4♠. When his came round to West, he chanced a double.

The result was beyond his wildest dreams. He led his singleton club and ruffed the second round of ♣10 on which declarer

Labour pains:

If GRAMMAR minus SCHOOL equals HARMAN and each distinct letter in the sum represents a different digit from 0 to 9, what is the value of GRAMMAR?

A copy of the new *Larousse Desk Reference Encyclopedia* will be awarded to the first correct answer opened on 8 February. Entries to: Saturday Pastimes, the Independent, 1 Caoda Square, Canary Wharf, Loodoo E14 5DL. Entrants who misspell "Independent" or "Pastimes" will be unlikely to win.

13 January competition: J times MAJOR = TORIS is solved as either: 7 x 59718 = 418026 or 9 x 40968 = 368712. So SMARTIES = 24083712 or 65984026. Winner: A Clark (York).

had played the jack. Although the return had been a suit preference signal for a heart, West sensibly switched to a diamond, for he knew that South held exactly one heart. Mistakenly, Sputh played low from dummy and, after winning with his singleton king, East returned his lowest club. Again this was a McKenney suit preference signal and again West knew exactly what to do. After ruffing, he led his ♠ 2. East trumped with ♠ 4 and led yet another club for the defenders to make their two top trumps separately.

It all added up to a delightful bonus of seven



The big picture

Something Wild
Sat 10pm BBC2

Lately there has been more interest in Melanie Griffith's (above) private life than in her movies. Yet she is the marvellously wacky Lulu in Jonathan Demme's genuinely imaginative comedy thriller, *Something Wild*. As her two partners – one strait-laced, the other psycho – Jeff Daniels and Ray Liotta both give lively performances, but it is Griffith's femme fatale with an unhealthy interest in bondage who steals the show. Like her hair, the film is not afraid to show its dark roots.

Imelda Marcos reads *Hellol*. We shouldn't be surprised, what with that magazine's tendency to tar the world's rich and famous with the same airbrush; in fact it seems rather fitting – especially since the rather distasteful *Ruby Wax Meets* – “Imelda Marcos” (Sun BBC1) is a *Hellol* interview from hell: the fawning format brutally subverted. When Imelda says of her late husband, “he was a great libertarian and humanist”, you really don't need Ruby waxing at the camera. But then, subtlety is not Ruby's game. La Wax, would-be mistress of misrule, not only discovers an old copy of *Hellol* in Marcos's living room, but one with herself grinning impishly from the cover. The coincidence seems genuine enough – and fortuitous, because Ruby's membership of the *Hellol* set seems to embolden Imelda to even greater confidences. She doesn't exactly admit to her husband's complicity in assassination and torture – or their asset-stripping of the Philippines for 20 years – but she does show Ruby her collection of shoes. Mrs Marcos, having successfully fought off charges against her in New York, is now installed back in the Philippines and in

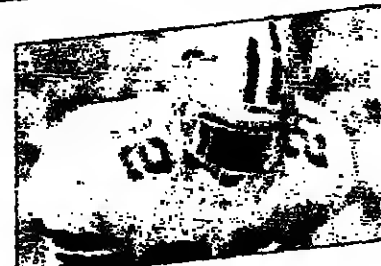
that country's parliament. “One day, no doubt, we'll have OJ for President,” quips Ruby. And one day, no doubt, we'll have *Ruby Wax Meets*. OJ Simpson: “Oh come on, OJ, let's see the other glove...” The highlands and islands of Scotland, we have been told countless times, from *Whiskey Galore!* to *Local Hero* to *Hamish Macbeth*, are populated by gently individualistic souls far removed from the irksome realities of modern life. It's an escape fantasy, of course (in America they call it *Northern Exposure*), and one that Donna Franceschild's excellent new four-part drama, *A Mag's Game* (Sun BBC1) has no truck with. This is a love story set among the grim realities of the west coast fishing industry, and stars Ken Stott, the hospital DJ from Franceschild's *Takin' Over the Asylum*, as a Scottish-born Irishman come home to sort out an ailing fish farm.

Alright, class. Hands up who can tell me how and where Sir Francis Drake met his maker? *Timewatch* (Sun BBC2) reveals that it was off the coast of Panama, where the ageing privateer, heavily depressed at having failed to steal the Spanish silver

reserves – and facing ruin – died, and was thrown into the deep. Shades of Robert Maxwell, in fact.

Now, if you give your body to test cancer cultures on your belly expect researchers to test cancer cultures on your liver, or, at the very least, give your limbs to medical students to play practical jokes with. You probably don't expect to become the first cadaver in over 2,000 years to be mummified using the techniques of the ancient Egyptians. American Egyptologist Bob Brier is the man with the embalming fluid, part of *Divine Magic's* “Magic of the Mummies” (Sat C4), an unexpectedly fascinating overview of Pharaoh culture.

Everyman (Sun BBC2) returns with a typically fair-minded look at the first American-style evangelical Christian satellite channel in Europe, Christian Channel Europe. Joint founder, Wendy Alec, became a born-again Christian while drunk at a disco: she had a vision of Jesus in the ladies' loo. If everyone who had visions while pie-eyed gave their lives to Jesus, we'd be a nation of what CCE's own publicity calls “happy, clappy, devil-stomping revivalists”. It's enough to make you teetotal.



The big match

Super Bowl XXX
Sun 10.35pm C4

This is the weekend when supermar-kets up and down the country traditionally find their stocks of Budweiser and hot dogs seriously depleted, as gridiron jocks find their loins for the annual marathon that is the Super Bowl. This year's match at the Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe, Arizona promises to be more closely-fought than most, as the boys from the Dallas Cowboys (the favourites, with such stars as Emmitt Smith, above) take on the toughs of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Saturday Television and Radio

BBC1

- 7.25 News; Weather (4492244).
- 7.30 Children's BBC; Supered. 7.35 The Artbox Bunch. 7.45 Inzou. 8.05 Willy Fog.
- 8.30 The New Adventures of Superman (R) (S) (8855477).
- 9.15 Live and Kicking. East 17 are the main guests (S) (68383398).
- 12.12 Weather (6949485).
- 12.15 Grandstand. 12.20 Football Focus: FA Cup fourth-round preview. 1.10 News. 1.15 Tennis: the Ladies' Final of the Australian Open. 1.50 Skiing: the men's downhill in Sestriere, Italy. Defending his World Cup downhill title will be France's Luc Alphand. 2.15 Ice-Skating: European figure-skating championships from Sofia, Bulgaria. France's Surya Bonaly will be the woman to beat. 3.00 Rugby League: live coverage of the 38th Cut Challenge Cup fourth-round tie between Castleford and St Helens. Commentary by Ray French, Joe Lydon and Terry Flanagan. 3.50 Football Half-Times. 4.00 Rugby League. 4.40 Final Score (16756337).
- 5.15 News; Weather (4014398).
- 5.25 Local News; Weather (3051911).
- 5.35 Dad's Army. The men acquire a boat (R) (769824).
- 6.05 Jim Davidson's Generation Game (S) (167331).
- 7.00 Noel's House Party (S) (657824).
- 7.50 The National Lottery Live. Dale Winton continues to stand in for Anthea, as diva Lesley Garrett presses the button. But remember: it's not over till the fat lady etc. (331718).
- 8.05 Casualty. Tim McInerney (Captain Darling in *Blackadder*) guests as a man with a drink problem (S) (326263).
- 8.55 News; Sport; Weather (Followed by National Lottery Live) (180331).
- 9.15 *Blue*. A Nightmare in the Daylight (Lou Antonio 1992 US). *Charlie's Angel* turned-TV movie queen Jaclyn Smith plays a teacher who is stalked by a man (Christopher Reeve) who thinks she is his wife, supposedly killed in an earthquake. Shades of *Vertigo*, but the only people suffering vertigo here are those with too-high expectations of this contrived nonsense. Interesting to see Reeve playing the bad guy, though (685244).
- 10.45 Match of the Day – the Road to Wembley. Extended highlights of three of today's top FA Cup ties, and all the goals from the rest (2833534).
- 11.55 *Gator* (Burt Reynolds 1976 US). Burt Reynolds doesn't seem to have been away from our screens of late – one of those coincidences of scheduling rather than signs of a revival, one hopes. This is Burt's directorial debut, a sequel to *White Lightning*, in which he resurrected his whiskey-runner turned bank, Gator McKusky. Co-stars Jack Weston and Lauren Hutton (891485).
- 1.50 Weather (2867799). To 1.55am.
- REGIONS: Wales, 4.50pm Wales on Saturday. 5.25 Wales on Saturday.

BBC2

- 6.50 *Design for Scandal* (Norman Taurag 1941 US). Reporter Walter Pidgeon is sent to dig the dirt on lady judge Rosalind Russell – and falls in love with her. Nippy comedy; nice performances (7470176).
- 8.15 Tennis. Highlights from the ladies' singles final at the Australian Open (57922468).
- 10.00 Nadan Nadia. Urdu comedy-drama starring Babra Shariff (S) (63393008).
- 11.50 Film *96 with Barry Norman*. Sabrina, *Waiting to Exhale*, and Pedro Almodovar's *The Flower of My Secret* all get re-Bazza'd (S) (5396718).
- 12.20 James Cagney – Top of the World. Tribute narrated by Michael J Fox (R) (9142718).
- 1.05 *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (Michael Curtiz 1942 US). A 43-year-old James Cagney turns in a wonderfully versatile song-and-dance routine in this big, brash patriotic wartime musical, telling the story of Broadway actor-playwright George M Cohan, who died that year (77191244).
- 3.10 *Tribute to a Bad Man* (Robert Wise 1955 US). The amazing Cagney again – this time deputising for Spencer Tracy who had walked off the set after a quarrel with director Wise, as a ruthless Colorado rancher whose wife (Irene Papas) is receiving too much attention from young Don Dubbins. A fine, underrated and beautifully photographed western (7647094).
- 4.40 Best of Esther (R) (S) (7325973).
- 5.10 The Oprah Winfrey Show (7686060).
- 5.50 TOTP2 (S) (706244).
- 6.35 Ice-Skating: European Figure Skating Championships. Highlights of the week's action (584379).
- 7.15 News and Sport; Weather (647621).
- 7.30 Scouting. Mifs' attempts to rid the country of arcane regulations, such as a 1780 Act which forbids one to charge for dancing on a Sunday – or much of the red tape surrounding greyhound racing (S) (515060).
- 8.05 The Trial. The re-run real-life Scottish court case series spotlights defence lawyer George More (R) (883973).
- 9.00 *Knowing Me, Knowing You...* with Alan Partridge (R) (S) (8805).
- 9.30 Peter York's Eighties. Joan Collins aka Alexis Carrington, Peter de Savary and Lord Young get walk-on roles, as York remembers the advent of the entrepreneur as star (97466).
- 10.00 *Something Wild* (Jonathan Demme 1986 US). Jeff Daniels becomes a yuppie-in-peril after he meets wild-child Melanie Griffith. See *The Big Picture*, above (569878).
- 11.50 Weather (946008).
- 11.55 *L'Homme de Ma Vie* (Jean-Charles Tacchella 1995 Fr/Can). Comedy starring the Portuguese actress Maria de Medeiros, as a woman who is made redundant and decides that hooking a wealthy husband would be better than finding a new job (390331). To 1.45am.

ITV/London

- 6.00 GMTV. 6.00 News; Weather. 6.10 Re-Wind. 6.40 Est Your Words. 7.10 Barney and Friends. 7.45-8.55 Saturday Disney 8.55 Power Rangers (2446008).
- 9.25 *Teletubbies*. *Soldier*. Soldier actor-turned-pop-star Jerome Flynn talks about his love of dolphins, while we get to meet Eliza Somers, Danielle Stark in *Neighbours* (4953350).
- 10.25 It's Not Just Saturday. Guests include the Shamen, Tristan Banks from *Home and Away*, and agony uncle Nick Fisher (S) (4680244).
- 11.30 The Chart Show (R) (S) (63398).
- 12.30 *Flamastic* (S) (42076).
- 1.00 News; Weather (73981843).
- 1.05 Local News; Weather (73960114).
- 1.10 Movies, Games and Videos (32666263).
- 1.40 *Alvinn* (R) (7621824).
- 2.45 *International Athletics*. Great Britain vs Russia. The BUPA International from the National Indoor Arena, Birmingham – the major UK meeting of this Olympic year (850621).
- 4.45 News; Sport; Weather (3086089).
- 5.05 Local News; Sport (3628553).
- 5.20 *New Baywatch*. A master of disguises escapes from a mental hospital, just for the fun of terrorising Stephanie and Logan. You can see his point (S) (911282).
- 6.15 Barrymore. Returning to the studio for the first series of this show since he outed himself (S) (922992).
- 7.15 *Blind Date*. How did Amy and James get on in Holland? (Including Lottery Result) (S) (928176).
- 8.15 *Beavis's Hot Shots*. Viewers spot TV and the movies with their camcorders – and sometimes their pets, as in tonight's *Dog Trek* (S) (248282).
- 8.45 News; National Lottery Update; Weather (195263).
- 9.00 *Die Hard* (John McTiernan 1988 US). Bruce Willis as Alan Rickman in office-block pyrotechnics, the best so far of these John McGlane adventures. Bonnie Bedelia plays the kidnapped wife in a terrific smash-bang-wallop thriller that made an unlikely action hero out of Willis (24070669).
- 11.25 *The Dead Pool* (Buddy Van Horn 1988 US). Fifth outing for “Fifty Harry” Callahan – and things have gone downhill fast. Clint investigates a series of slayings that seem to point to sleazy British film director Liam Neeson. This won't make anybody's day (S) (913211).
- 1.00 *Funny Business*. With Norman Wisdom acolyte Lee Evans (73022).
- 1.30 *Pajama Party*. Katie Puckrik gets to grips with 2.55 *Gift of the Gift* (R) (7027461).
- 3.50 *Shift* (1361138).
- 4.45 *ITV Sports Classics II* (19469886).
- 5.05 *Coach* (S) (8427914).
- 5.30 News (64799). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.05 *Sesame Street* (R) (2936805).
- 7.05 *Ulysses 31* (R) (3004805).
- 7.30 *Super Mario Brothers* (R) (6173621).
- 7.40 *First Edition*. Jon Snow makes the news accessible to children (3467398).
- 8.00 *Trans World Sport* (81176).
- 8.10 *The Morning Line* (S) (83447).
- 10.00 Don't Look Down. Indoor climbing joins the list of minority sports televised on C4 (93737).
- 11.00 *Gazette Football Italia*. Look forward to tomorrow's live clash between Internazionale and Parma (73973).
- 12.00 *The Late Late Show* (S) (5265824).
- 12.55 *Steaming Pansies*. Nigel Farnell meets women involved in the more normally male world of steam trains (R) (8063350).
- 1.55 *Channel 4 Racing*. From Doncaster. If cancelled because of weather, an alternative schedule will be shown as below until 4.35pm (19792973).
- 1.55 *VM* Virginia City (Michael Curtiz 1940 US). Ambitious but miscast Civil War western (Humphrey Bogart as a stinky Mexican bandit?) also features Errol Flynn, Randolph Scott and, as a rebel spy, Miriam Hopkins (S) (19792973).
- 4.10 *Sun and the Serpent*.
- 4.35 *Dr Seuss on the Loose* (R) (7351398).
- 5.05 *Brooklyn's Own* (S) (2635718).
- 6.30 *Right to Reply*. Roger Bolton with more viewers' reports and ideas about television (S) (263).
- 7.00 *A Week in Politics* (5060).
- 8.00 *Divine Magic*. Egyptologist Bob Brier shows how magic was an everyday part of life in ancient Egypt. See *Preview*, above (S) (1008).
- 9.00 *Alf Wiedersehen Pet*. The 1980s *Geordie* bricks saga. Work at the Manor grinds to a halt when it is discovered to be a listed building (1767534).
- 10.05 *Father Ted*. TV star Harry Sellers arrives to judge the All-Priests Stars in their Eyes Lookalike Competition. Cult comedy (R) (S) (433756).
- 10.35 *Eurotrash*. Jean-Paul Gaultier and Antoine de Caunes look at the delights of cyber-sex via an interactive sex suit (R) (S) (645350).
- 11.10 *The White Room*. With Smashing Pumpkins, the Pretenders, Lush, Definition of Sound, Oasis, Joan Osborne, and US dance act, BT (S) (892931).
- 12.10 *Late Licence*. The *Giltie* Show. From last night (R) (S) (639224).
- 1.00 *The Legend of the 4 Kings*. Manga (S) (2737935).
- 1.55 *Twilight Zone*. Elliot Gould plays an arrogant restaurateur who gets his comeuppance, while in “A Small Talent For War”, the aliens that exterminated evolution two million years ago decide that the human race isn't up to scratch, and must be eliminated (S) (5413312).
- 2.20 *Baadaaz TV*. Barry White guests (R) (S) (662354).
- 2.50 *Girl's Girl's* (7482770).
- 3.15 *Paris*. Al Pacino's critically panned attempt to *Blackadder*-ise the Paris art scene of the 1920s (R) (S) (68119). To 3.45am.

ITV/Regions

- ANGLIA
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (42076). 1.10 Warner Cartoon (73958379).
- 1.20 Film: *The Magician* (5256282). 11.25 Film: *Carry On Henry* (711599). 1.05am *Pajama Party* (9958157). 2.30am *Funny Business* (13008).
- 3.00am Film: *Hot* (47586). 5.00-5.30am *Wanted Dead or Alive* (39190).
- TYNES/NEWMARKET
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (42076). 1.10 Film: *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* (68028350). 5.10 *Time*: Full Time (4000195). *Yorkshire*: *Scoreline* (4000195). 1.05am *Funny Business* (6963799). 1.35am *Pajama Party* (4444848). 3.00am *Coach* (93686). 3.30am *War of the Worlds* (5254190). 4.20am *Cue the Music* (9543191). 5.15-5.30am *Profile* (6378428).
- CENTRAL
As London except: 12.30pm *Heartland* (42076). 1.40 *Cartoon Time* (42365176). 1.50 *Knight Rider* (4188911). 5.10 *Cartoon Time* (4000195). 3.50am *Jabberjaw* (2463935). 5.20-5.30am *Asian Eye* (3441489).
- ITV
As London except: 12.30pm *California Off Beat* (42076). 1.40 *Cartoon Time* (42375824). 1.45 *Knight Rider* (417485). 11.25 Film: *Carry On Henry* (711599). 1.05am *Pajama Party* (9958157). 2.30am *Funny Business* (13008). 3.00am Film: *Hot* (47586). 5.00-5.30am *Wanted Dead or Alive* (39190).
- MIDLAND
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (42076). 1.10 *The Big Guy* (32676640). 1.35 Warner Cartoon (73958379). 1.50 *Arnold* (4188911). 11.25 Film: *Carry On Henry* (711599). 1.05am *Pajama Party* (9958157). 2.30am *Funny Business* (13008). 3.00am Film: *Hot* (47586). 5.00-5.30am *Wanted Dead or Alive* (39190).
- WESTMIDLAND
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (42076). 1.10 *Surfmaniacs* (900008). 1.50 *Arnold* (4188911). 1.05am *Pajama Party* (9958157). 2.30am *Funny Business* (13008). 3.00am Film: *Hot* (47586). 5.00-5.30am *Wanted Dead or Alive* (39190).
- SW
As C4 except: 7.00am *Ulysses 31* (85718). 10.00 *Champions*. Football Crazy (93737). 11.00 *The Persuaders*: Someone Waiting (7373). 4.35pm *Living Memory*: The 1980s (7351398). 6.30 *Hollyhocks* (263). 7.00 *Newyddion Nos* (4008). 7.15 *555* (522114). 8.15 *V* Florida John O'Rourke (246224). 8.45 *Livestars* (245195). 9.20-11.00pm Film: *Butterbox Babies*. The true-life story of Lila and William Young who instituted the Ideal Maternity Home in Nova Scotia during the Depression and the Second World War. The home was eventually exposed as a front for a catalogue of crimes, including illegal adoption and the burial of illegitimate infants. Starring Susan Clark, Peter MacNeill and Michael Riley (766002).

Radio

Radio 1

07.00-9.00am
7.00am Kevin Greening. 10.00 Dave Pearce. 12.30 Danny Baker. 2.30 Jo Whalley. 5.00 John Peel. 7.00 Danny Rampling. 9.00 *Radio 1 Rap Show*. 12.00 *Essential*. *Live* in Birmingham. 4.00-7.00am Lynn Parsons.

Radio 2

06.00-12.00
6.00am Mo Dutta. 8.05 Brian Matthew. 10.00 Judi Sifers. 12.00 Hayes on Saturday. 1.30 Hancock's Half Hour. See Choice. 2.00 Martin Kellner on Saturday. 4.00 Nick Barradough. 5.00 Joe Brown in Concert. 6.00 Are You Dancin'? 7.00 Dr Who. 7.30 The Lighter Side. 9.30 David Jacobs. 10.00 Sheridan Morley. 12.05 Charles Nove. 4.00-7.00am Mo Dutta.

Radio 3

09.00-12.00
7.00am Record Review. 9.00 Building a Library. John Deathridge's comments on recordings of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. 10.15 *Record Review*. Haydn: *String Quartet in E flat*, Op 33 No 2. Spohr: *Sextet in A minor*. 11.15 *Recess*. 12.00 *Private Passions*. With actress Stan Phillips. 1.00 News; Layer by Layer. Archaeologist Andrew Jones concludes his series of digs in Coventry, the Roman capital of Wales. 1.25 *Youth Orchestras of the World*. Victoria March. Bizarre. Edward McGuire. Sirocco. Bedford. Sun Paints Rainbows on the East Waves. John Barnes. Chance: Incantation and Dance. Vaughan Williams: *English Folk Song Suite*. AJ Patten. Finnegan's Wake (Irish Youth Wind Ensemble/James Calvanagh). Michael Norris: *Waltz for strings*. Dvorak: *Serenade in E for strings* (Netherlands Youth String Orchestra/Roland Kietz). 3.10 *Harewood House Concert*. Ernst Kovacic (violin). David Owen Norris (piano). Ravel: *Violin Sonata*. Brahms: *Violin Sonata in A*. Op 100. Kreisler: *Praeludium and Allegro* in the style of Paganini. Lebedev: *Gypsy Romance*. Tambourin. Chinoiserie. Syncope. Because romanticism. La gitan. Chanson. Louis XII and Pavane in the style of Couperin. La Chasse in the style of Carlen. Old German Shepherd's Mordant. Marche miniature viennoise. (L2).



Choice

Angry Hancock devotees dismayed to find Paul Merton mugging his way through *Through the Eyes of an Angry Man* last night on TV can take refuge in Hancock's Half Hour (1.30pm R2). It's the one in which they find an unexploded bomb in the cellar. Meanwhile, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* comes live from the Met (6.30pm R3).

4.45 Nash Ensemble. Rossini, arr. Ben. Wind Quartet No 1 in F. 5.00 Jazz Record Requests. 5.45 Music Matters. Ivan Hewett presents a major exhibition focusing on the work of Impressionist Sergei Diaghilev. 6.30 *Live from the Met*. The Barber of Seville. By Rossini. Ruth Ann Swenson (soprano), Raul Gimenez (tenor), Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera/Adam Fischer. Act 1. (6.05-8.35 The Met Opera Quiz.) Act 2. See Choice. 9.30 *Best Words*. Michael Rosen talks to Scottish poet Robert Crawford about his new collection *Masculinity*. 10.00-1.00am *Casualty*. Walton and James Moody. Alyn Sponer introduces highlights of two sets recorded at Ronnie Scott's club in London, featuring saxophonist and flautist James Moody, and pianist Cedar Walton.

Radio 4

09.00-12.00
6.00am News Briefing. 6.10 Farming Today. 6.50 Prayer for the Day. 7.00 Today. 8.58 Weather. 9.00 News. 9.05 Sport on 4. 9.30 *Breakaway*. 10.00 News; Loose Ends. 11.00 News; The Week in Westminster. 11.30 From Our Own Correspondent. 12.00 Money Box. 12.25 Just a Minute. 12.55 Weather. 1.00 Any Questions? Jonathan Dimbleby's guests in Margate are journalist Janet Daley, Baroness Jay of Paddington; the Rt Rev Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester; and the Rt Hon Sir George Young MP. Secretary of State for Transport.

1.55 Shipping Forecast. 2.00 News; Any Answers? 2.30 Saturday Playhouse. *Stars in Their Eyes*. A radio musical by John Lavel and Tim Riley. With Brian Hibbard. 3.45 *Back Here*. Stephen Perry, back in the UK after working in America, compares life here with there. 4.00 News; That's History. 4.30 The Final Frontier. Jeff Nelson explores the physical and psychological barriers that must be overcome for successful interplanetary travel. 5.00 *Consequences*. Paul Lewis considers the fallout of Norman Fowler's reforms on pension schemes. (4/4). 5.40 *Starwatch*. From her back garden in Buckinghamshire, Heather Couper presents a live link-up with astronomers around the world. (3/6). 5.50 Shipping Forecast. 6.00 *Sox O'Clock News*. 6.25 *Week Ending*. 6.50 *Postcard from Gotham*. A celebration of Coleridge's famous poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, featuring the thoughts of David Bedford, Michael Bogdanov, General Sir John Hackitt, Pauline Stainer and Richard Lewis. 7.50 *Saturday Night Theatre: The High Frontier*. In Roger Stern's drama, a cosmonaut is preparing to return home after a year in space. But while he has been away, the old Soviet Union has collapsed and with it his beliefs and dreams. Based on the real life story of cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev. With David Hargreaves and Shaun Prendergast. 9.20 *Music in Mind*. 9.50 Ten to Ten. 10.00 News. 10.15 *Stage on Stage*. Simon Armitage introduces young

poet Glyn Maxwell in performance at the 1995 Edinburgh Festival. 10.45 *Feedback*. Piers Bishop sorts through letters sent to the Radio Times during the Twenties and Thirties. (1/4). 11.00 *Touch of Genius*. The popular writer George Bernard Shaw is now in his seventies, talks to June Knox-Mawer. (3/4). 11.30 The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy. By Douglas Adams. 12.00 News. 12.30 The Late Story: A Trip to Tortugero by John Latham. 12.48 Shipping Forecast. 1.00am As World Service.

Radio 5
08.30-10.00
6.05am *Dirty Tackle*. 6.30 Brian Hayes at Breakfast. 9.05 *Weekend* with Ken and Whitaker. 11.05 *Top Gear*. 11.35 *Crimo Desk*. 12.00 *Midday Edition*. 12.15 *Sportscast*. 1.00 *Sport on Five*. 6.05 *5x5*. 7.35 *Straight Up*. 8.05 The Box. 8.35 *Delly on Saturday*. 10.05 *The Treatment*. 11.00 *Night Extra*. 10.25 After Hours. 2.05-6.05am *Australian* Open Tennis.

Classic FM

09.00-12.00
6.00am Sarah Lucas. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00 *Classic*. 1.00 *Classic*. 2.00 *Classic*. 3.00 *Classic*. 4.00 *Classic*. 5.00 *Classic*. 6.00 *Classic*. 7.00 *Classic*. 8.00 *Classic*. 9.00 *Classic*. 10.00 *Classic*. 11.00 *Classic*. 12.00

at Rocco's gate

the bid, and were asked to prepare a holding statement if an offer materialised. Sir Rocco, for his part, was in Yorkshire, preparing to shoot grouse.

2. Into Battle

Sir Rocco Forte had been chief executive of Forte for 15 years. But he had only really taken full control in 1993, when his father finally stepped aside. Since then, the company had at last begun to make progress. Unwanted assets were sold off. A new chain of hotels, Meridien, was bought and the tired restaurants received attention for the first time in years. The new management team – which included, crucially, Keith Hamill as finance director – was given the benefit of the doubt in the City. The message, that Forte was a company at last on the mend, was getting through.

"We had no idea the bid was coming," says a key adviser on Forte's defence team. "We certainly didn't think someone who knew absolutely nothing about the business would mount an attack."

From the start, then, the battle was all about who could manage the Forte assets best: cost-cutting Robinson, the man who famously worked only four and a half days a week, or Sir Rocco, the patrician workaholic who had long ago abandoned his playboy ways. That the two men did not like each other became clearer by the day. Robinson made fun of Sir Rocco's shooting holiday, while Sir Rocco said famously that "all [Robinson] knows about marketing is his big mouth".

Sir Rocco was appalled that the company his family had built, and that he, at last, was running, could be taken away from him. He was convinced the City would back him if he could just explain his vigorous plans for the future. He returned to London on the day of the bid to a frenzy of calls from shareholders, analysts and reporters.

That day and the next, a defence team was hastily formed, bringing together Forte's standing advisers, SBC Warburg's John Howarth, Morgan Stanley's Michael Tory and UBS's Oliver Pawle. An old school friend of Sir Rocco, Roberto Mendoza, was critical to the preparation of Forte's defence. Formerly one of the world's top fund managers, Mendoza is vice-chairman of US banking giant JP Morgan.

"That first day was the low point of the whole bid," says a participant. "Nothing thereafter could match the shock, surprise and anger."

A shaken Sir Rocco also called in the help of establishment friends, who provided some welcome support in the darkest days of the battle. No more useful ally emerged than Max Hastings, the new editor of the *Evening Standard*, whose newspaper championed Forte all the while. Hastings even set up a meeting between Sir Rocco and Sir Christopher Bland, the chairman of LWT at the time of Granada's hostile bid. Sir Rocco was told he could get pointers on Robinson's weaknesses. But the hard work occurred at

Forte's head office in High Holborn, where Keith Hamill's finance team put in 17 hours a day for 10 days, preparing Forte's critical defence document.

From the start, the team considered radical options, including a dismemberment of the company. Sir Rocco would later insist that the demerger plan, whereby the restaurants would be hived off from the hotels, had been in the works for months.

Granada's bid strategy had been simplicity itself: an opening shot of £3.3bn, a merciless attack on Forte's indifferent profit performance and a promise to turn around the key operations.

But Forte's response was, Robinson concedes, "sparkling". Asset disposals were brought forward, with Lillywhite's and Griersons sold within days of the launch of the bid. On 7 December, Forte released a robust defence document promising sharply higher profits.

A phony war was launched, as the two sides traded insults, rubbished each other's strategy and busily began talking to key institutional shareholders. From the beginning, Granada had decided to leave the field during the middle weeks of the bid to Forte. "We knew that this thing would be decided by 35 institutions," Allen says. "We went to them at the beginning of the bid, and then left them a period to reflect."

Forte took another tack, peppering the media with press

releases. Indeed, rival PR firms believe the Forte strategy was too focused on the media, rather than on institutions.

But in secret, Forte was working up its trump card, a move that would change the momentum of the bid and give Robinson his first real fright.

3. The final clash

On Christmas Eve, with Robinson tucked up safe at his ancestral home in Donegal, Ireland, a Sunday newspaper trumpeted the news: hewing giant Whitbread was buying Forte's restaurants business for £1.05bn. The very assets Robinson most coveted were to be sold off in a desperate attempt to foil the bid. By the following week, Forte added the kicker: £800m would be awarded to loyal shareholders through a massive share buy-back scheme.

"I certainly had a moment of doubt," Robinson says. There were even whispers that the bid could be dropped altogether. But by the end of the week, he had changed his mind. "We could see that the share buy-back wasn't going to work, and that shareholders did not believe it."

On the weekend of 6 January, the Granada team began a marathon session at company headquarters. It was time to decide by how much to increase the bid. "We always knew the initial bid was an opening shot," an insider says.

Soundings in the City made

it clear that Granada could not raise more money, and the option of a special dividend looked attractive. Ironically, it was the level of financial detail provided in the Forte document that convinced Robinson he didn't need fresh funds: Forte shareholders who sold their stakes to Granada would get the special dividend out of Forte's own reserves. In other words, the prey, not the predator, would pay.

At the same time, Lazard were deep in conversations with the Council of Forte to buy the special 50 per cent stake. The Council first demanded £250m, while Granada suggested £10m. On Monday, 8 January, a day before Granada's final offer for Forte was due, the Council and Lazard settled on £50m.

Forte's advisers concede that the revised offer, worth £3.8bn, allowed Granada to regain the momentum. It provided an opportunity, too, for Robinson to drop any pretence about running the upmarket hotels, which he had never much cared for anyway. The revised offer was a blunt leveraged buyout, using Forte's own reserves and the promised sale of £2bn in assets to pay for the deal.

"It was so distressing," a Forte team member says. "Everyone forgave him the U-turn, and that was when we realised everyone wanted him to win."

For two weeks thereafter, the bid went Granada's way. The share price, mysteriously, continued to rise, and eight of the top 10 analysts recommended that shareholders accept the bid. Robinson approved a dawn raid, allowing Granada to pick up 9.9 per cent in the market.

The coup de grace was delivered by Carol Galley of MAM, which held 14 per cent of Forte. Famously and controversially dubbed the "Ice Maiden" by the Forte-supporting *Evening Standard* ("Iron Maiden" was rejected on the grounds of poor taste), she went personally to Sir Rocco's office on Tuesday to announce she was backing Robinson, just as she had in the LWT bid two years before.

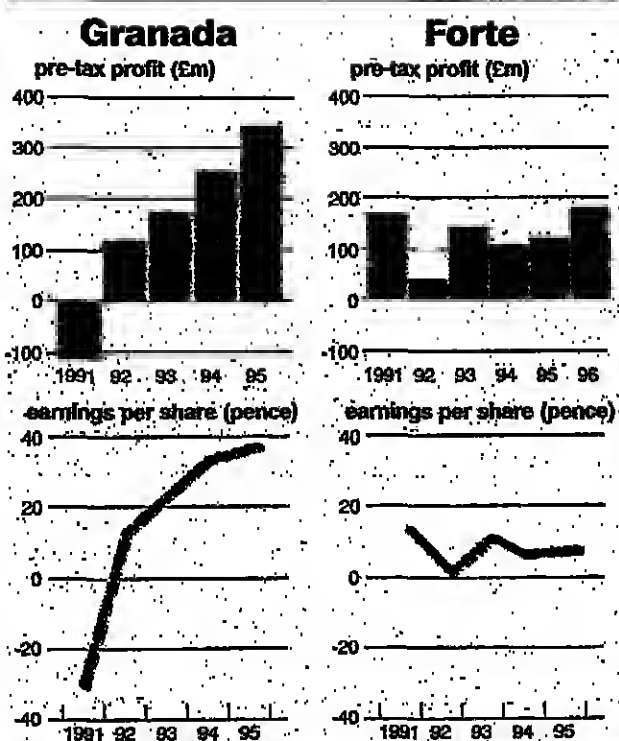
All told, three-quarters of Forte's shareholders backed Robinson. There was, says a close colleague, "a great deal of sadness for Rocco, but he was brilliant on the day."

For Robinson, the result was anti-climatic. "I didn't feel elation, really," he says. "It only now is beginning to sink in."

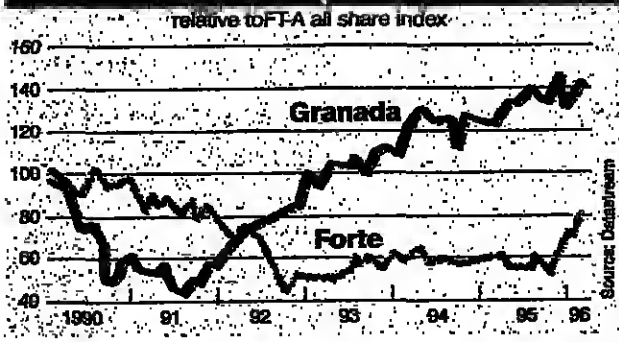
There will be plenty of news out of Granada and Forte in the months to come. The upmarket hotels will be sold – perhaps even back to Sir Rocco, who is attempting to raise financing. "I'll be back," he promised on the day he lost the empire.

Granada's ownership of Forte is bound to alter radically the leisure landscape of Britain. Roadside restaurants will get a new look. Many of them will be transformed into fast-food outlets, boasting Burger King or Pizza Hut. Thanks to centralised purchasing and cost controls, hotels will look the same in the North as in the South – the same services, the same food. Granada's defining strategy is a simple one: uniformity drives profit.

Granada hurdles flat Forte



Share prices



All Robinson knows about marketing is his big mouth

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someone else will

As the saying goes, "You can't please all of the people, all of the time". But given that it costs five times as much to gain a new customer as it does to keep an existing one, it pays to hang onto them. A Freephone Customer Careline can help. It's an easy way for people to get in touch with you. Whether it's to ask for advice, make suggestions on improving your service or even let off steam. A Careline also shows you value customer's opinions, that your company is prepared to listen. In fact, a recent survey found that 82% of customers are likely to re-order with you again if their complaint is successfully dealt with. For more information on your own Customer Careline, talk to us on 0800 800 800.

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Bernie's message for Britain: reach for the stars

This week will probably be remembered as Harriet Harman's nightmare, the week when the middle classes tormented themselves about the Right Thing To Do when choosing a school – the week when the country was split over whether Ms Harman should be martyred or canonised.

But she did not express the most potent feelings of the week. We expect privileged people such as Harriet Harman to worry about balancing aspiration and personal ambition against their obligations to the rest of society. They have been torturing themselves for generations. *Noblesse oblige*, duty, guilt, shame – there is a whole vocabulary available to rehearse their dilemmas.

The really startling revelation came not from Ms Harman, but from Bernie Grant, her fellow Labour MP. As Ms Harman gave a grovelling apology, Mr Grant committed a far greater heresy: he said that he wished he had sent his children to a private school rather than to the local comprehensive in Tottenham, north London. State education had "very, very seriously hampered" their progress. And he – representative of some of Britain's most deprived voters – had had enough of it. His children – and presumably the children of his constituents – deserved better.

Britain is not used to hearing aspirations from these quarters. A prince may aspire to a pauper's life, but the poor man is meant to stay at the rich man's gate. There is still a disappointing acceptance among too many less advantaged people that they should, in fact, know their place. And the place for working-class children is in the state system, however inadequate that may be. They too easily accept what they are given: only the

middle and upper classes enjoy the privilege of wrestling with the choice of private education. As for health care, everyone is meant to accept that "rationing" is inevitable, even good for the soul.

Mr Grant's intervention has exposed a lie: the notion that dissatisfaction, ambition and desire to achieve is essentially middle class. A man who has so often been pilloried as Barry Bernie has become the first modern Labour politician to legitimise an appetite for self-improvement, a desire for ordinary people to get the best for themselves and their children. Harriet Harman exposed her own guilt-ridden struggles and that of Labour-supporting professionals. Bernie Grant did more: he liberated an authentic anger at underachievement felt by the great mass of voters.

This energy was harnessed by Margaret Thatcher, whose policy of selling council houses ditched Labour's paternalism and acknowledged that the wish to own property was virtually universal. But Thatcherism's appeal to ambition and aspiration palled: it tipped over into an association with greed. It did little to provide ordinary people with better education. Meanwhile, the Nineties recession and housing slump suggested that Thatcherism had offered empty promises.

Now Mr Grant has opened a road for Labour to express personal ambition – a word which, in British society, and left-of-centre British society in particular, has been made to seem vulgar and unattractive. But Bernie's message poses many problems. There is Britain's anti-aspirational culture to overcome. We are more interested in failure than success (just think how the Duchess of York's amazing success in raising \$4m has been belittled).



Prejudice still shuts people out of many jobs where connections, accent and colour of skin play an insidious role in determining who gets to do what. For all the Prime Minister's talk of creating a classless society, his image of warm beer and cricket on the village green recalls a static, class-ridden country.

The process of diminishing potential starts early. Mr Grant is not the first parent to complain about lack of drive instilled by schools. "The staff believe the kids won't make it," he said. "They don't encourage the kids to fix their aspirations high."

These problems are graphically illustrated in sport, where chief institutions, be it the MCC or Wimbledon, remain riddled with outdated snobbery that excludes rather than encourages a great deal of potential talent. Combined with the anti-competitive ethos that has overtaken the school sports system, Britain is in the second division of sporting nations. In just the same way as its economy has already slipped down the table.

People collude in their own underachievement. Parents who have been let down by their own education often fail to expect the best of their own children, and so the cycle of underachievement carries on. In Britain, those who distinguish themselves at school can find themselves isolated as swots. And there is still much begrudging within poorer communities of those who excel: dismissed as class traitors, in league with the toffs and bosses.

Political leaders – whether Tony Blair, Paddy Ashdown or John Major – should recognise the importance of Bernie Grant's intervention. By breaking Labour ranks, he has demonstrated the leadership that is needed to wake people up to

chase their ambitions and accept them as honourable and legitimate.

The middle classes are ahead of the game. They realise that they can no longer simply pass middle-classness on to their children by giving them the right manners and good connections. John Major's image of inheritance cascading down the generations will not be enough to guarantee their security, as Britain becomes more meritocratic, more competitive. If middle-class families are to hang on to their status, they must give their children skills and education. Nothing, not even Harriet Harman's political ambitions, can be allowed to stand in the way of that imperative.

Bernie Grant understands the urgency. The child of two teachers, an immigrant whose education was his chief asset, he is tuned in to the dangers of today's competitive economy. Most of his constituents are ill-equipped to deal with the future. They risk being left behind.

They need a society that will build and harness their ambitions, not diminish them and so preserve an anachronistic order. That might mean big changes, such as introducing vouchers into the schools system, weighted in favour of the less well-off, empowering parents to do the best for their children. It might involve an expansion of more individually funded health care – the use of alternative therapies is demonstrating the level of personal initiative in health care.

Mr Grant has pointed the way towards fresh thinking from Labour. Many voters – even Labour supporters – are no longer happy with what they are given. They want to seek out their own horizons. Labour should back them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who fears elections in Northern Ireland?

From Mr Paul Evers

Sir: David McKitterick's analysis of the Northern Ireland situation ("The stalling of peace", 25 January) rings true; as soon as George Mitchell showed signs of removing one spanner from the works, John Major promptly threw another one in. The question is why?

The most charitable explanation is that he does not have the sensitivity to realise what fears his proposal would arouse. Many thousands of people in Northern Ireland suffered discrimination and worse for many decades under the yoke of the elected Stormont government, with its built-in Unionist majority. A new elected body, even if it is simply a body of negotiators, will almost certainly suffer from the same imbalance, and any attempt to make it more truly representative would lose the support of the Unionists. Hence the predictable republican hostility to the idea.

I suggest that John Major's real reason for this proposal is to create delay. Setting up a new elected body would probably take many months. There is probably a well-ried Foreign Office axiom that the best way

to handle a tricky negotiating situation is to protract the discussions until the heat has gone out of the affair, and sheer weariness leads the opposing parties to make concessions.

This would, however, be a very risky strategy in the current volatile situation. The last thing John Major should want is the prospect of fighting a general election against a background of renewed violence in Northern Ireland. Many might perceive the cause of that violence as the present government's stubborn immobility in the face of such broadly-based pressure to move the peace process forward. Yours faithfully, PAUL EVERS, Chester, 25 January

From Mr Martin Moore
Sir: Perhaps an explanation for John Hume's and the SDLP's hysterical reaction to the Government's proposals for an elected body in Northern Ireland lies in the findings of a recent opinion poll, published in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 17 January 1996, which gave SDLP support at only 21 per cent (and Sinn Féin at 7 per cent).

needlessly to it? Moreover, in an era when youth promiscuity is widely condemned, one would expect society to welcome Sarah's and Musa's love and fidelity, rather than seek to destroy it.

The authorities claim that they have Sarah's welfare at heart. However, it's hard to envisage that her welfare is best served by forcing her to undergo the humiliation of a so-called "virginity test" and by changing the man she loves with rape, despite the evidently consensual nature of their relationship.

Astonishingly, even though Sarah has talked of suicide if she is kept apart from Musa, officials seem prepared to risk the possibility of such a tragedy. Yes, there is real harm being done to this young girl, but it's not being done by her boyfriend. Yours faithfully, PETER TATCHELL, London, SE1

Why destroy young love?

From Mr Peter TatCHELL

Sir: Your thoughtful, compassionate editorial ("Sad tale of a modern-day Juliet", 25 January) on the hounding of the 13-year-old child bride, Sarah Cook, was a much-needed corrective to the hysterical, heartless reaction of the Turkish and British authorities. Although her marriage may be unlawful, there is no evidence that Sarah was coerced into, or harmed by, the relationship with Musa Komeagac. Indeed, she appears to have been very happy – until the heavy-handed intervention of officials.

Why the authorities should want to (or be allowed to) break up the love between these two teenagers is beyond my comprehension. Isn't there enough emotional unhappiness in the world without adding

It is also telling to note that in the same poll 70 per cent supported the establishment of an elected body (14 per cent were opposed and 16 per cent answered "don't know"). Of SDLP supporters, 68 per cent supported the proposal (as did 50 per cent of Sinn Féin supporters).

These figures show how far out of touch nationalist politicians are with the electorate they claim to represent. Yours faithfully, MARTIN MOORE, Belfast, 26 January

From Mr Peter Marshall
Sir: I guess the electorate of Northern Ireland numbers about one million. Well over 200,000 people live in the mainland UK who were born in Northern Ireland. Should we have a voice in the election planned by John Major?

The position of Northern Irish people living in Eire may be similar. The position of those living outside the British Isles is perhaps different, since they have truly emigrated. Yours faithfully, PETER MARSHALL, London, SW4

Short on consistency

From Ms Josephine Toynbee
Sir: I agree that Harriet Harman's choice of school for her son was a purely personal, family decision that she had to take in his best interests, within the context of this Government's relentless underfunding of non-grant maintained schools.

I am just amazed that Clare Short could publicly criticise her sister MP, saying she must "answer to her constituents for her choice". I am a member of Ms Short's own Ladywood constituency Labour Party. Here there has been no answerability for nearly a year. Our constituency has been suspended and we were forbidden to hold meetings and excluded from the important national debates at the Clause Four and annual conferences.

We are still unable to get a clear reply from the Labour Party on the grounds for these suspensions, the progress of its inquiry or what we can do to be reinstated. Meanwhile, Clare Short, as sitting MP, is very likely to be imposed as candidate for the next general election, bypassing all local consultations or selection procedures. Yours faithfully, JOSEPHINE TOYNEBEE, Birmingham, 22 January

Name of the @

From Mr Roger Chapman
Sir: Amperseed (&) derives from "and per se" and so surely "@". (Letters, 24 January) should be called "amperseed". Yours faithfully, ROGER CHAPMAN, Keighley, West Yorkshire, 24 January

Hard- and soft-core currencies in EMU

From Mr Adam Szarf

Sir: Considering Gavin Davies' thoughtful analysis of problems likely to face the UK outside the single European currency (22 January), it is rather surprising that no mention has been made so far about the experience gained under the Bretton Woods system, which combined stability of exchange rates with some flexibility in their management.

Exchange rates were fixed in terms of US dollars, but were allowed to change whenever necessary to correct a "fundamental disequilibrium" in a country's balance of payments. This concept was never given a definite meaning, which perhaps was wise considering its complexity. Its interpretation was left to the managers of the IMF and the countries concerned, facing unacceptable reductions in income and employment. The system was not perfect, but it worked reasonably well for a quarter of a century after the Second World

War. It came to an end only when President Nixon took the dollar off the gold standard in the early 1970s.

Today, external stability could be achieved by fixing exchange rates between the "hard" Euro and currencies of the soft core countries on a semi-permanent basis. This would reduce the danger of beggar-my-neighbour devaluations by the latter countries, which is of such concern to German authorities. Similar to Bretton Woods, exchange rates could still be subject to occasional negotiated adjustments, mutually agreed between the inner and outer cores of EMU in situations approximating "fundamental disequilibrium".

Yours sincerely, ADAM SZARF, Brussels

From Mr Walter Cairns
Sir: Your editorial on the difficulties facing the prospect of economic and monetary union in Europe (25 January) advocates relaxation of the Maastricht criteria as an alternative to postponing the 1999 deadline. In economic terms, there might be a case for such a step; in political terms, it could well be disastrous.

Ever since the Maastricht treaty came into effect, a number of member states have gone to inordinate lengths to meet the Maastricht criteria. This has in many cases involved severe public expenditure cuts and high interest rates, which is the price usually paid for any strict deflationary policy. This in turn has caused increases in unemployment and many bankruptcies of small-to-medium firms.

If these criteria are now relaxed for the sake of adhering to the 1999 deadline, there will be some very angry people among these victims, who will conclude that all the sacrifices made on the altar of EMU were not so necessary after all. Yours sincerely, WALTER CAIRNS, Manchester



A lecture in the sciences of geography and astronomy, 1748. Hulton Picture Library

Ptolemy's heliocentric universe

From Mr W. K. Harper

Sir: Tom Wylie ("Journey to the beginning of time", 24 January) puts *The Almagest* of Ptolemy (2AD) as the beginning of the advance of astronomy, but it was in fact a retrograde step that began a 13th-century interlude from Greek science until the recovery of Copernicus and Galileo in the 15th century. This was because the Catholic Church adopted, and made into dogma, *The Almagest*, its Earth-centred solar system and

"divine" universe, and all scientific progress was blocked in Christian Europe.

In 390BC, Heraclides suggested that Venus and Mercury may orbit the Sun. Democritus (c.380BC) described the Milky Way as being composed of stars, the Moon as being similar to the Earth and matter composed of atoms; Aristarchus of Samos (c.270BC) asserted that the Sun is the centre of the solar system and the planets revolve round it. Aristarchus estimated the dis-

tance of the Sun from the Earth by observation of angles. Eratosthenes of Cyrene (c.240BC) calculated the circumference of the Earth as 28,000 miles, and Hipparchus of Nicaea (c.130BC) used a total eclipse of the Sun to determine correctly the distance and size of the Moon. Seleucus, about 190 BC, was the last Greek astronomer to teach a heliocentric theory of the solar system.

Yours faithfully, W. K. HARPER, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent

Ageing travellers

From Ms V. M. Roberts

Sir: Demography is not often mentioned in discussions of car use. But in the coming decades a rapidly increasing number of 80- and 90-year-olds are going to feel – or be persuaded by others to feel – that they can no longer comfortably drive. This

at a time of life when it is paramount for good health to maintain outside interests and go out to see family and friends. Has it been considered that they may provide a growing demand for public transport, affordable and easy in availability. Yours faithfully, V. M. ROBERTS, London, NW5

Animated viewing

From Mr Geoffrey Brace

Sir: May I, through your columns, point out to the compilers of the British Attitudes Survey (report, 25 January) that "watching television" cannot by any stretch of the imagination, be classed as a "leisure time activity". The classing of cinema, ballet, opera, theatre and music as "activity" is also questionable, to say the least, where it refers to the passive process of watching or listening. Yours, GEOFFREY BRACE, Topham, Devon

DAVID AARONOVITCH

Food for thought



At some point during the week, you may have come across a new name: Olestra. Remember? It's not Anthea Turner's younger sister, who is threatening to run her own cable show interviewing lottery winners and has the same line in nasty sweaters as her sister. Her name is Wendy, not Olestra, and I hope that this is the last you'll ever hear of her.

The true Olestra is a fat. "A fat what?" you ask. Not a fat anything – a fat found in foods. On Wednesday, Procter and Gamble, who have brought us endless soap powders and foodstuffs, finally got the go-ahead from the US Food and Drug Administration to produce grub made with the new zero-calorie fat. First off the starting-blocks will be Oleo potato crisps, containing half the calories of your normal crisps and none of the fat. Cakes, biscuits and chocolate will all follow – all tasting delightfully greasy, but leaving no fat behind them.

I'm not going to waste space explaining the molecular biology of Olestra (which, of course, I fully understand, having attended a grammar school and nearly passed chemistry O-level). Suffice it to say that Olestra's particular property is simply to pass straight through you.

And that, say its critics, is also its drawback. There is a very slight chance that the completion of its passage through the body may be – how shall I put it – unheralded. The usual security warnings may not sound, the gates may fail to close in time. Great for the manufacturers of personal hygiene products (including, perhaps, Procter and Gamble), but appalling for the rest of us. So there is now a suggestion that Oleo packets might feature a warning that their contents may "cause intestinal discomfort, or a laxative effect".

Now, some folks may be keen enough on combining a low-calorie diet with the eating habits of a Vietnamese aristocrat to run this risk, but not me. In my experience, the body is untruly and difficult enough without adding Olestra to it. All my life, this fleshly temple

has been letting me down. It has ruined romantic moments, spoiled dramatic gestures and failed to respond at times of crisis.

Consider. Adolescence is not a great time of life for any male. At 16, my confidence was shaky, veering from arrogance to a feeling of worthlessness. I wanted two things above all: to be seen as the romantic philosopher-prince that I really was, and (related to this) to get my leg over. Cue the boil. Not a pimple, or a slight skin disturbance, but an enormous, swollen, angry boil. And not hidden on the leg, or the shoulder, or even the hum, but slap in the middle of my noble, contemplative forehead. "There you are," it seemed to say, "write a poem about that."

Travellers to exciting, exotic lands will testify to the way that the body's minor caprices can dominate the mind's endeavours. Usually, the problem is food poisoning. On almost any morning at the foot of the Sphinx, in the gardens of the Taj Mahal, or by the fountains of the Alhambra, there will be one man or woman whose entire being is focused on a square inch of sphincter, and whose only thought (despite all the splendour and history surrounding them) is whether they are going to make it. Next time you are at one of these places, watch carefully. Or indeed (as Wendy's sister might say), it could be you.

The problem is that most of us have a completely unrealistic mental image of our physical selves. It is constructed in early adulthood, at an optimum time. We "know" we are fat, or bald, or past when we run upstairs. But somehow those awful holiday snaps lie, those jokes from family and colleagues exaggerate. We carry around with us our true selves: younger, thinner, more graceful and fitter. And then something goes wrong – a bad bout of flatulence, a sty, a millisecond's clumsiness – and the image dissolves, leaving us face to face with mortality.

Which, I contend, does not need some new product like Olestra to make it any worse.

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Every morning we've been having breakfast together not knowing if we will be having supper together – Pandora Maxwell, whose husband, Kevin, has been acquitted on multi-million pound fraud charges.

We don't care what people say. Our little princess is in love – Jackie Cook, mother of Sarah, 13, who has married a Turkish waiter. Thanks to the gloomy calculations of middle-age mortality, made for the protection of life insurance companies, we know that three Conservative MPs will die before the end of this summer – Roy Battersley, Labour's former deputy leader.

We Scots can take a girl out, wine and dine her, satisfy her every sexual whim, marry her, have children, get divorced – and still have change from a fiver – Dominic Diamond, presenter of Channel 4's "GameMaster".

We're perfect for each other. We both love getting out of our heads – Oasis rocker Liam Gallagher on his romance with actress Patsy Kensit.

Scotland is the only nation in the world to have discovered oil and grown poorer – Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party.

Letters should be addressed to: Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. (Fax: 0171-293 2856; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

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What follows the triumph of Trimble?

The peace process rests on the Unionist leader's plans, says David McKittrick

Ulster Unionist hearts swelled with pride this week when John Major rose in the Commons to endorse David Trimble's suggestion that an election should become the centrepiece of the Irish peace process.

The sweetness of the moment was increased by Mr Trimble's quietly statesmanlike response to the Prime Minister. Most of all, it was heightened by the clear discomfiture of SDLP leader John Hume, who angrily accused Mr Major of seeking to buy votes.

Unionists have become glumly accustomed to being pilloried as obstacles to peace and progress. The sight of Mr Hume,

He has yet to win the trust of those with whom he will deal. A Catholic priest spoke of him having 'ogre status' among nationalists

incensed and isolated in the House, was for them a rare and welcome reversal of roles. It is much more common to see Mr Trimble in a temper than Mr Hume. In that moment, the veteran nationalist leader appeared to have been bested by Mr Trimble's new Unionism.

It may be that the triumph was beginner's luck for Mr Trimble, who has led his party only since September. Or it may be that his proposal for an elected body simply suited the Government's objective of maintaining a slow pace in the peace process. Or it may be a new era of more constructive Unionism, though few non-Unionists are yet convinced. Last September, Mr Trimble was the surprise choice of his party to succeed the septuagenarian James Molyneux; most thought the job would go to the man who is now his deputy — John Taylor. Instead, the party opted for Mr Trimble, the youngest and most militant of the five candidates on offer.

What swung the election for him was his reputation as an uncompromising hardliner as epitomised by his performance several months earlier at what is known as "the siege of Drumcree". This was the incident in which Mr Trimble, an Orangeman, played a leading role in resisting a police ban on an

Orange plan to march through a Catholic district in Portadown, Co Armagh.

The 48-hour stand-off was attended by some disorder, and only yesterday, 15 people appeared in court on charges arising from it. But it has entered Orange folklore as a famous victory for loyalist determination not to back down in a confrontation, and it helped get Mr Trimble his job. The party also liked his relative youth, his articulacy and his accomplished television performances.

He had been MP for Upper Barn, one of Northern Ireland's most bitter sectarian cockpits, for only five years before his elevation, although he has a political track record stretching back to the early Seventies. Almost all of that time was spent on the far right of Unionism, as a member of a number of politically extreme organisations and, since 1978, of the main Ulster Unionist party.

Throughout those years, he was a law lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast. A series of Catholic employees have won religious discrimination cases against the university, but Mr Trimble has made no secret of his belief that the real story is one of discrimination against Protestants. At Queen's, he met his second wife, who was one of his students. Together, they have four children; she works in his constituency office in the mornings, describing herself as "the domestic back-up." They listen to Verdi and Strauss, and he is fond of Wagner.

On his election, Mr Trimble hit the ground running, arranging a comprehensive series of meetings with most parts of the political spectrum — except, of course, Sinn Féin — in Belfast, London, Dublin and Washington. This was a real departure for a Unionist leader, for his predecessor was a model of reserve and reticence, instinctively shying away from such encounters.

The Trimble style, however, has not been to use such meetings to build bridges, or win friends and influence people. Instead, he goes for directness rather than diplomacy, putting his points in reportedly forceful manner. Assuming the plans for an elected body go ahead, a key question will be whether he would attempt to move away from the traditional Unionist approach of treating such institutions as gladiatorial arenas.

The main pointers against his doing so lie in his hardline record and in the huge amount of mistrust that exists in Northern Ireland politics and Anglo-Irish relations. One feature of Mr Trimble's politics is that he exudes distrust of his political opponents.

He has regularly accused nationalists of acting in bad faith. He has often expressed mistrust in British governments, too. In launching his leadership campaign, for example, he declared: "I would never go into Downing Street alone. You've got to have someone else with you to take notes, observe and listen carefully. One must be careful not to be seduced."

Conversely, he has yet to win the trust of those with whom he will deal. No significant northern nationalist figure has given signs of being persuaded that Mr Trimble is serious about wanting to reach an agreement with their tradition. A Catholic priest spoke of him having "ogre status" among nationalists.

Nor is there any sign that government ministers are opting for an election on the basis of any belief that Trimble looks ready to make



His future is Orange: David Trimble is not known for compromise. Crispin Rodwell

a new historic accommodation, for they have often privately complained of his aversion to compromise. It was only a few months ago that a minister spoke of seeing the Unionist leader described as a moderate: "I was having my breakfast when I read that. Nearly puked up my Frolics."

Mr Trimble is the man of the moment, but what has not yet emerged is his view of the strategic direction Unionism should be taking. It is not clear whether he believes in stalling, in the event that the ceasefires eventually break down, or whether he really envisages, after the election, sitting down for the first time with Sinn Féin. A great deal, perhaps even peace itself, will depend on the course he chooses.

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A matter of reputation and honour

Tory attempts to rubbish the Scott inquiry may backfire, says Andrew Marr

The Conservative establishment is getting its retaliation in first. With the so-called "arms-to-Iraq" report due next month, its author Sir Richard Scott has been presented to readers of the *Spectator* and *Daily Express* as a naive obsessive, a cranky radical, and a fantasist whose findings, should they happen to criticise ministers, will be ignored by fair-minded people.

Rarely has a senior judge been subjected to such contemptuous personal attack by public figures as in the articles by Lord Howe and Sir Bernard Ingham. But then, rarely has any judge probed so painfully into the dark recesses of agonisingly difficult policy-making in Whitehall. In the *Spectator*, Lord Howe derides the judge's "disposition to challenge convention, defy precedent" and his "tenacious enthusiasm for his own views". Sir Bernard says that the judge is not only wet but is "waterlogged".

Both critics contend that Scott has been unjust to ministers by not allowing them vocal legal representation, against precedent. This implies that assorted ministers are retarded imbeciles, unable to speak for themselves. Was the Attorney General Sir Nicholas Lyell — like Lord Howe, a QC — disadvantaged by his lack of legal representation? Poor dears. More generally, both attacks smoke with outrage at the arrogance of a mere judge prying into decisions of ministers and civil servants; that Scott was appointed by the Prime Minister to do it is not, it seems, of much relevance.

It is impossible to take Sir Bernard's assault wholly seriously. Ingham, defending due process and complaining that a rather mild-mannered judge has been "astonishingly adversarial" is like the Princess of Wales lecturing the nation on "Least said, soonest mended."

Lord Howe is in a different category. His attack is detailed, dogged and long-standing. He couldn't contain anger he didn't feel if his life depended upon it. He is unlikely to have been put up to anything. But it is possible to be an honest critic of Scott and also a handy weapon in what is becoming a political battle, not one about judicial process. If there is any covert politics in Scott it's there, only more so, in Howe, Ingham and so on.

As soon as the report is published, the counter-attack will move from the pages of conservative newspapers to Westminster. Howe and Ingham are laying down the arguments to be picked up then by selected MPs, who will form a protected phalanx around any vulnerable-looking minister. By the time John Major is called upon to respond, Scott himself and his inquiry generally will have already been subjected to heavy rubbing. Downing Street has been ringing around in an attempt to co-ordinate the response. For an example of the kind of operation we should expect, look no further than the co-ordinated response to Major's performance in the summer leadership contest, which killed speculation about whether his vote was a convincing one within five minutes of it being announced.

This time the objectives are two-fold. First, to prevent any ministerial resignation that would badly damage the Government just when the Conservatives are beginning to hope that their fortunes are on the turn. Second is the broader attempt to refute any suggestion that this administration is ruthless, high-handed or amoral. It is a fight about reputation, even honour.

If the judge really goes for Sir Nicholas Lyell and others we will see a competition between Conservative politicians and the judge for the public's verdict. The press will split on broadly left-right lines. So, with a few maverick exceptions, will the Commons. My guess is that the ministers will probably survive for much the same reason as Harriet Harman survived this week: the leader's backing will be absolute, on the "we all hang together or we all hang separately" principle.

But the wider political verdict will probably go the other way: it is easier for a judge to dishonour politicians than for politicians to dishonour a judge. And Conservatives need to be very careful about the tone of the operation on which they have embarked. If you are trying to persuade voters that you are not a ruthless or arrogant administration, then engaging in a ruthless or intemperate denigration of a judge you appointed doesn't seem a good way to go about it.

Jo Brand's week

Nice to see that Tiggy Legge-Bourke (unfairly berated maiden) has joined forces with Peter Carter-Ruck (toffs' lawyer). A pair of more silly names I have not heard for a very long time. This spat between the members of the upper echelons of society is desperately dull, especially as we don't know for sure, despite tabloid speculation, what Diana said to Tiggy at the staff Christmas party.

I have said some terrible things to people at parties for the simple reason that I was tanked up. Just getting Tiggy's name correct when you've had a couple of Babybams is in itself a bit of a triumph, I would imagine. Now the hangovers have well and truly cleared up, perhaps they should all grow up.

Marrying off your daughter, aged 13, to a Turkish waiter seems to me a very medieval thing to do, not to mention the fact that Enid Blyton must be revolving at the speed of light in a mausoleum somewhere. Everyone is throwing their hands up in despair and asking how the parents could possibly have given their blessing. Because they are stupid, one would imagine. I often think that because anyone with the correct equipment can have a baby, there are always going to be parents who are hopeless at parenting, at which point we call upon social workers to step into the human relations equivalent of Catch 22. If they don't do

something, they're criticised, and if they do, nobody gives them any credit anyway — all the job satisfaction of a punch-bag, I'd say. The father of the bride touted his story round the papers, like they do, and sold it to the highest bidder. Unlikely to be the *Financial Times*, wasn't it? It was rumoured he got paid 20 grand. Is that the going rate for a dowry? Must tell my dad. Meanwhile, in Turkey, our waiter has been accused of rape and the Cook bride has been made a ward of court back here. Surely they must all be in some way related to the Mitchell family in *EastEnders*. Truth is stranger than fiction — and a lot sadder.

My brother is currently languishing at home in Germany having had his arm broken in two places after an accident during a friendly game of football. It's funny how "friendly" games always seem to produce more injuries. This particular game involved my brother's firm and a team of Croatians from a sports club. My poor brother took the full force of a shot on his arm as he tried to save it. "They all take the game so seriously," he told me. Perhaps we could have guessed that.

Poor old Madonna is getting it in the neck from the Argentinians at the moment because she has taken on the role of Eva Perón in the film

of *Evita*. The Catholic bishop of Buenos Aires has called her "Satan in drag." (He sounds like a laugh. Perhaps they should get him on *Have I Got News For You*). Maybe they should offer Margaret Thatcher the part. That would really be interesting.



Madonna: on the Eva destruction

The most popular television show in Moscow at the moment is a live action crime programme hosted by someone blonde, pretty and aged 20, so we can reassure ourselves that they are cottoning on fast to Western democratic values. Aforementioned presenter rushes attractively all over Moscow

covering the most gruesome murders, sparing the viewers nothing as a cavalcade of purple binated bodies are served up for their delectation. Just in case people are having their dinners, light relief is supplied by a parade of crime suspects handcuffed to policemen. And very difficult it is to tell which is which. This type of programme seems to be on the rise in us from all sides. We do have *Crimestwatch UK*, but that all tends to be in the best possible taste and leaves not the blood and guts. The only educational aspect of these sort of in-your-face crime shows is that they make you realise how much more of an attractive prospect it is dying on Hollywood celluloid than it is in real life. Apart from that, they are pointless.

On the whole, I get quite nice letters from viewers when the television series is on. This may well be because my agent tends to chuck out all the horrible ones threatening unmentionable things and herating me. However, the occasional poison missive slips through, particularly if it has gone to the BBC by mistake.

One such charming and eloquent sonnet plopped onto my mat the other day and I recognised the writing immediately, as I have received several items from this person in the past. The content isn't imaginative particularly and combines the nouns "slut" and "slag" with a Roger's *Thesaurus*-worth of adjectives for fat. As per usual, the name and address were completely unintelligible, not even allowing me the satisfaction of sending the person in question a thank-you letter. What a shame. I bet a poison pen pal could be loads of fun.

Sometimes it's quite hard to get good reception on Teletext, so consequently I am presented with what looks like a half-finished crossword in which I have to fill in the missing letters by guesswork. Having missed the news the other day, I turned it on to see the headline, Blair backs Har-iet Harman. Well done, old son, I thought, you've sacked her. A quick trawl of the serial revealed it was a "b", not the "s" I surmised. I don't suppose she's going to resign either.



Harriet: Likely to keep her job

It seems Belgium has privatised deportation. A recent investigation showed the Belgian government employs a firm called Budd, (wouldn't a "y" on the end have been great?) to do it. The journalist who did the story said: "The government uses methods advocated some years ago by the extreme right." Without the eclectic mix that different ethnic groups bring to a country, no wonder Belgium is such a tedious place. I always liked that joke that goes: Why did the Belgian chicken cross the road? Because there's nowt else to do in Belgium, of course.

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Sainsbury's profits warning shocks City

NIGEL COPE

Sainsbury's shocked the City yesterday when it issued its first profits warning since it floated on the stock market in 1975. The company said profits in the current year would be "below earlier expectations" due to increased spending on customer service measures, keener pricing in its supermarkets and a poor performance from Texas Homecare, which is struggling in the cut-throat DIY market.

The announcement forced analysts to downgrade their full-year profit forecasts from as high as £810m to between £750m and £760m. This is significantly lower than last year's £809m and breaks the company's unbroken run as a public company, during which it has reported higher trading profits each year.

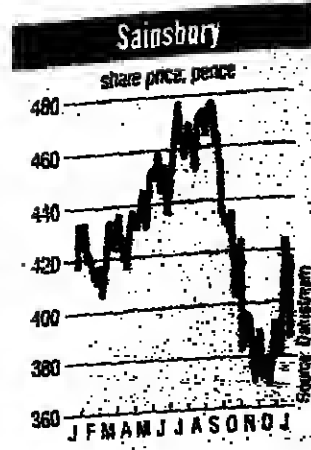
The profits warning wrong-footed City analysts, who had felt the group was turning the corner after a difficult 1995 during which it lost ground to Tesco and Asda. Tony MacNeary of NatWest Securities said: "This shows there is still a lot more to do in the business. New management has still to get to grips with the business and there could be more costs to come."

Sainsbury's shares fell 21.5p to 389p on the news. The slump wiped out gains earlier this month when the City had responded warmly to a boardroom shake-up which saw David Sainsbury split the roles of chairman and chief executive. The warning overshadowed a relatively upbeat statement on sales increases, which showed that the January Savers price promotion had provided a significant boost to sales.

Mr Sainsbury said the group was keen to regain its market shares leadership over Tesco but admitted it might take time. "That will remain our objective but I don't think [it will happen] this year," he said. Supermarket sales in the 16 weeks to 13 January were up by 3 per cent on last year, excluding new store sales. Trading over the Christmas period was healthy at 4.5 per cent up on the previous year. In the peak pre-Christmas week, sales broke the company's previous record by a significant margin.

The figures are lower than the 8 per cent increase reported by Tesco last month, though this was achieved on a lower margin due to the launch of its loyalty card. Sainsbury's has added 2,500 more supermarket staff at a cost of around £10m. These will be employed on checkouts, service counters and as packers. David Sainsbury said the management restructuring was now complete and dismissed suggestions that the group needed an operations director. "We appointed a new retail director, David Clappam, only four or five months ago. We

have a good, strong team." However, the Texas Homecare chain, which Sainsbury's bought from Ladbrooke a year ago, has continued to struggle. Sales in the 16 weeks to mid January fell by 7.5 per cent, due to store closures. Kitchen sales were slow. Sainsbury's had been saying that the chain would break even over the full year but some analysts are now forecasting a loss of up to £10m. It is expected that the stores' performance will improve when they are re-branded under the Homebase name.



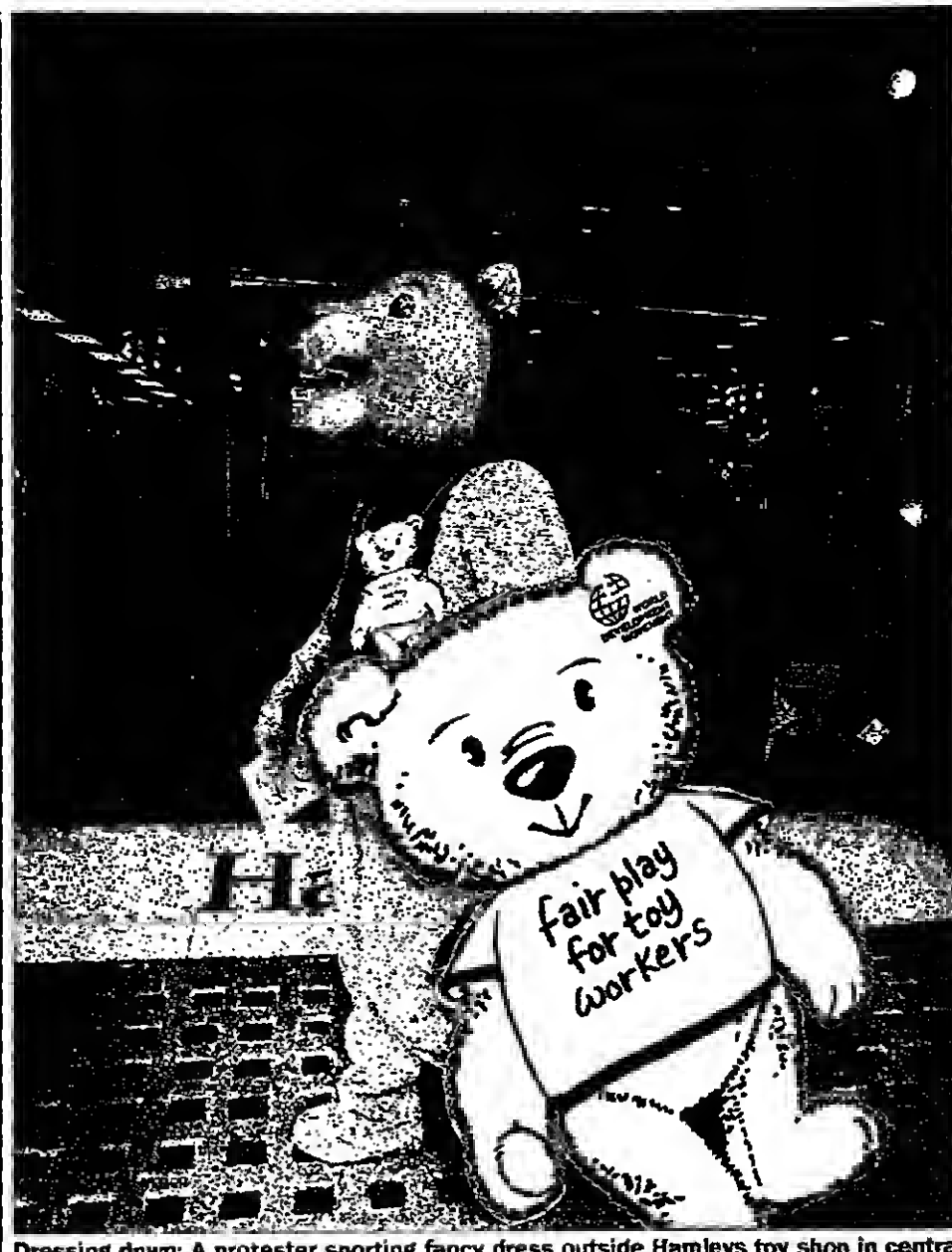
Persimmon rights to fund Ideal bid

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

The acrimonious battle for control of Trafalgar House subsidiary Ideal Homes will come to a head early next week when Persimmon - which controversially secured an exclusive negotiation period for the deal - makes a formal offer of about £100m and launches a rights issue to part-fund the acquisition. Persimmon's talks with Trafalgar sparked a row two weeks ago with rival house-builder Beazer Homes, which claims to have been shut out of discussions to buy Ideal.

Beazer said yesterday it was holding its own fire until it saw the size and terms of the offer, but it was still considering its options, including the possibility of appealing directly to Trafalgar House's independent shareholders. Persimmon's exclusivity period, which is understood to run out at the end of the month, caused a furor because it was seen as a cosy deal stitched up between the Persimmon non-executive director Sir Chips Keswick and Trafalgar House, which is 26 per cent owned by the Keswick-controlled Hong Kong Land. Trafalgar maintains that Persimmon's offer was superior to any others in a number of unspecified respects - and not just financially.

Duncan Davidson, chairman of Persimmon, was locked in meetings yesterday and unable to comment on the acquisition which would be the first such deal since Persimmon came to the market 10 years ago. If the deal goes ahead, Persimmon will jump up the league table to fourth place behind Wimpey, Barratt and Beazer. Beazer, which is twice the size of Persimmon, insists that it is better placed to move quickly to complete the acquisition because its offer would be financed principally from its own cash resources and bank borrowings. The Persimmon proposals are thought to include a one-for-two rights issue to raise just over £100m, for which underwriting will be sought on Monday.



Dressing down: A protester sporting fancy dress outside Hamleys toy shop in central London yesterday during a demonstration against conditions for factory workers in Asia. Some are paid 42p per hour for a 60-hour week. Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

Colorvision credit licences withdrawn

GLENDA COOPER

The Office of Fair Trading has decided to withdraw the consumer credit licences of Colorvision, the television and video stores chain after a series of alleged dishonest practices including supplying second-hand goods, presenting them as new. But the company will retain the licences until the outcome of an appeal lodged against the decision with the President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang. The OFT had threatened to revoke the licences in October, following customer complaints. An OFT adjudicating officer found the Liverpool-based company to have committed offences under consumer protection legislation and to have "engaged in business practices appearing to him to be deceitful or oppressive or otherwise unfair or improper".

Mr Lang upholds the OFT's findings. Colorvision will not be able to deal in any form of consumer credit or credit brokerage. That would be a major blow for the group which makes about 45 per cent of its sales under credit arrangements. The complaints included giving misleading price indications and dishonestly supplying second hand or ex-display goods, telling customers they could not cancel agreements when it was in their right to do so and altering details on agreements without consumers' consent after they had been signed. Other wrongdoings were using advertisements which were deliberately misleading about the goods available, not offering refunds where consumers had a right to them, failing to carry out services agreed in repair contracts within a reasonable time or at all. The director-general of Fair Trading, John Bridgeman said: "Revoking a consumer credit licence is not something we do lightly given the effect it is likely to have on a business. But no company should be in any doubt that its licence can be revoked if it is treating its customers unfairly or dishonestly."

Fokker gains brief reprieve

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Fokker, the stricken Dutch aircraft maker, was yesterday given a five- to six-week reprieve by its government while a search continues for a buyer. Hans Wijers, Dutch economic affairs minister, said the government was making an interim loan of 255m guilders (£100m) and would also bring forward the purchase of four Fokker jets worth 110m guilders. Mr Wijers played down the chances of a rescue from any quarter. He said: "There is no reason whatsoever for great optimism. The company faces very great problems. Partners still had to be found for Fokker in a very short period in an industry with 'large financial risks, continuing overcapacity and ruinous prices. For the time being it is just words and paper.'"

The move came after Daimler-Benz, Fokker's German majority shareholder, said it could no longer support losses at Fokker, which is minority owned by the Dutch government. There has been persistent speculation that Canadian-based Bombardier, owner of Shorts, is interested in buying Fokker, but so far neither Bombardier nor Fokker has confirmed talks are taking place. Bombardier has a reputation for buying and turning round companies in difficulty. It makes regional jets and executive and commuter aircraft such as the Canadair RJ and Challenger, de Havilland Dash 8 and Learjet. Fokker has however confirmed it is talking to a number of aerospace companies around the world without naming them. Analysts expect that if Bombardier does buy Fokker it will do so only after the Dutch government has cleaned it up. The price is thought likely to be purely nominal. Mr Wijers said the amount agreed with the administrators "was based on providing enough time to produce a reasonable scenario, while preventing it from dragging on so long that the assurances would disappear."

Stakis wants to buy mid-market Forte hotels

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Stakis, the hotel and casino group, has thrown its hat in the ring to buy some of the mid-range hotels acquired by Granada following its successful bid for the Forte group. David Michels, chief executive, said yesterday he hoped to have talks soon on the subject with Gerry Robinson, Granada's chief executive. The two men are close and were in contact during the bid battle for Forte, but no formal talks concerning the hotels purchase have been held.

"We're not interested in the Trophy hotels or the Meridian chain, but we would be keen on buying some of the three- and four-star hotels," a Stakis spokesman said. "Whatever Robinson might put up in London, any or all of them would be within our grasp." The defeated Sir Rocco Forte has announced his intention to get City backing to repurchase the upmarket hotels. "I think Rocco is after the more luxury and international hotels, and we are after the more mid-market hotels, if any are for sale," Mr Michels said.

A leading analyst said: "Stakis is probably one of the best run businesses in the UK sector. They have the highest rate of return. A deal could make a lot of sense." Stakis has been steadily expanding its hotel business for the past two years, which helped the group to a 28 per cent profit increase to £26m in 1995, despite a decline at its casinos. The group currently has 43 hotels with a total of just over 5,000 rooms. It issued an upbeat trading statement yesterday, saying that in the 13 weeks to the end of December, room occupancy rose to 72 per cent and the casino business showed modest gains. Stakis shares, which have performed strongly over the past year, closed down 2 at 87p.

Mr Robinson and Granada's chief operating officer, Charles Allen, spent much of yesterday at Forte's HQ seeking to reassure staff. At their first meeting with staff below department head level, they said that salaries would be paid and there would be no fast organisational changes. The broking houses BZW and ABN Amro Hoare Govett, both advisers to Granada

oo the bid, are believed to have placed 26 million Granada shares yesterday at 69p. Forte will be replaced in the FT-SE 100 index after the close of business on 30 January, the FT-SE Actuaries UK Indices Committee said. It will be replaced by the largest company on the reserve list at that time. The five companies on the replacement list are Anglian Water, Greencoats Group, MEPC, Next and Mercury Asset Management, the fund manager whose decision to sell its 14 per cent stake in Forte is credited with having swung the takeover battle.



Gerry Robinson: Expecting to hear from Stakis soon

Lights go out on Liffe's late session

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Liffe, London's go-go derivatives exchange, has torn a large leaf out of the Stock Exchange's collective works of cock-ups, admitting the hasty shut-down of its new electronic options trading system just 15 minutes after its launch. There were shades of Taurus minor yesterday, as pained Liffe officials, more used to re-

butting malicious market rumours of coke in the restrooms, sought to explain why the plug had hastily to be pulled on Thursday on their "very leading edge system". Traders across the City had been looking forward to the chance to turn a few quid in this first extension into electronic after-hours options trading. Suddenly they found themselves tapping in the dark, after having grappled confus-

ingly with reference prices that had taken on minds of their own. "The system was overloaded and not performing acceptably," said a Liffe spokeswoman, who sounded in danger of crashing herself. "We need to do some more development. Options trading can be very complex." The APT Plus system was developed in-house at a cost of £2m to enable trading in Bund

options to carry on electronically after the close at 16.30 of the normal day's trading, which is conducted by open outcry on the exchange floor by about 2,500 traders. Liffe has a daily turnover volume in excess of £125m, and is the biggest futures and options exchange outside Chicago. It is currently linking up with the big US exchange to extend the distribution of its derivative products.

Abbot wins battle for oil operator OIS

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Aberdeen-based Abbot Group has won the battle for control of OIS International, the oil services company that was floated at the end of 1992. Abbot saw off a counter-attack launched on Thursday morning by OGC International, also based in Aberdeen, which had won the agreement of the OIS board. Abbot, best known for its KCA drilling subsidiary, originally offered around £8m for OIS just before Christmas after exploratory talks broke down. OIS, whose profits slumped to £144,000 in the year to December 1994 from £2.2m the previous year, dismissed the offer as opportunistic.

The approach of a white knight in the form of OGC was welcomed as an opportunity to increase the range of services offered by the two companies, which have links dating back to 1977. But the rival 28p-per-share bid from OGC was quickly trumped by a renewed 32p cash offer from Abbot. The renewed bid, which includes an alternative of five Abbot shares for every eight in OIS, values the company at more than £9.9m. Abbot last night owned or had acceptances for more than 52 per cent of its target. Shares in OIS, which came to the market at 50p, rose by 4.5p to 52p. The company has been struggling to recover from severe problems in 1994, when some key contracts were lost or deferred and margins took a battering in the face of fierce competition. OIS specialises in technical inspection services for the offshore industry and was established in 1972 with bases in Aberdeen and Great Yarmouth.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change %	1995/96 High	1995/96 Low
FTSE 100	3734.70	+0.50	+0.0	3758.20	2954.20
FTSE 250	4085.50	+1.10	+0.0	4086.90	3300.90
FTSE 350	1854.60	+0.10	+0.0	1863.90	1492.40
FT Small Cap	2005.58	+1.82	+0.1	2005.58	1678.61
FT All Share	1828.89	+0.22	+0.0	1837.17	1469.23
New York	5247.18	+30.35	+0.6	5242.84	3832.08
Tokyo	20663.84	+249.15	+1.2	20669.03	14485.41
Hong Kong	11111.67	+8.79	+0.1	11111.67	6967.93
Frankfurt	2432.93	-10.79	-0.4	2443.72	1910.96

INTEREST RATES					
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	Long Term
UK	6.25	6.06	7.44	8.51	7.60
US	5.44	5.19	5.88	7.82	6.11
Japan	0.38	0.59	2.95	4.67	-
Germany	3.56	3.28	5.89	7.41	6.70

CURRENCIES					
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
\$ (London)	1.5130	-0.17c	1.592	£ (London)	0.6553
¥ (London)	1.5035	-0.40c	1.5895	¥ (London)	0.6851
DM (London)	2.2412	+0.57c	2.4089	DM (London)	1.4912
¥ (London)	160.357	-0.99c	167.782	¥ (London)	106.675
£ (London)	83.1	unch	88.8	£ (London)	96.8

OTHER INDICATORS					
Index	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday
Oil Brent	16.35	-0.52	16.43	RPI	150.7+3.2p
Gold	405.60	+2.1	278.39	GDP	106.9
Gold E	269.86	+3.48	238.017	Base Rates	-6.25pc

Source: FT Information

Handwritten note: "JP 11/10/150"

P&O is undervalued but not a tempting target



There is a time for making the assets sweat, but also in business, a time when managements must look to the future and invest in it; that at least is what an increasingly worried P & O management has been telling the City

After Forti, P&O? The parallels are obvious. Even after their recent run, P&O shares, like those of Forti before the Granada bid, trade at a substantial discount to underlying assets. Nor are profits at P&O anywhere near their potential: making the assets sweat is apparently what the Carol Galles of this world expect of company directors these days.

At P&O it is simply not happening. And although P&O is plainly not quite the business dynasty that Forti was, it comes close. Lord Sterling of Plaistow has been at the helm for donkey years; some accuse him of falling asleep at the wheel.

So is P&O heading the same way as Forti, into the arms of an asset-stripping predator? Post Forti, the idea of the break-up bid is suddenly respectable once more, in the City at least. With its dozen or so unrelated divisions, P&O might seem a classic for the treatment; it is easily possible to get to a break-up value of £7 a share so even after the recent rise - up another 13p yesterday to 54.2p - there is still plenty to go for.

However, there are a number of reasons why the present wave of speculation is probably only a hiccup. For a start P&O is an awfully large bite for anyone: the likely takeout would be anything up to £4bn. On top of that, the bidder inherits a mountain of debt. Furthermore, the break-up effort required would make P&O distinctly unappealing to any industrial bidder. In the Forti

case, the disposal programme faced by Granada is large but containable, in the sense that it could be achieved in just two or three sales. With P&O, there would be division after division to sell, all for the sake of the one or two businesses that the bidder really wants.

This wouldn't rule out a break-up specialist such as KKR, of course, but whether the Americans would have the stomach for an assault of such size on British soil must be open to question. The stock market has always found it hard to value conglomerates, even those like P&O that claim to have some kind of common thread to unite their disparate businesses. P&O is also in some highly unfashionable, down-trodden industries.

Even the most inspired of managements would find it hard to sparkle in cross-Channel ferries, construction and house-building. As it is, P&O is probably as effective as most, its under-performance is also in part a reflection of the fact that it invests heavily for the future - an old-fashioned concept this.

There is a time for making the assets sweat, but also in business, a time when managements must look to the future and invest in it; that at least is what an increasingly worried P&O management has been telling the City. In the past three or four months it has visited more institutional shareholders than in the previous three or four years. The message is that the dividend is safe and that the business will soon be reaping the rewards of

heavy spending and caring management. If, in the meantime, bid speculation makes investors realise quite how undervalued the company is, nobody is going to quarrel too much with that.

PFI is just another form of never-never

The cross-party Treasury committee concluded its hearings on the Private Finance Initiative this week. It must now begin the more difficult part - deciding what to make of it all. If MPs have any sense, they will expose the PFI for what it really is - a questionable exercise in off-budget financing.

The scale of PFI expansion the Government is seeking is staggering. According to the Treasury, departments expect to have agreed £1.4bn worth of PFI contracts within the next three years. In its absence, total public sector capital spending would fall drastically, by almost a tenth in real terms, in the next financial year.

No one is in any doubt about the political reason for this helter-skelter rush into these uncharted waters. The Government couldn't make its sums add up for the budget, so something had to give. In time-honoured fashion, that something was public investment. Enter the *deus ex machina*, the Private Finance Initiative.

A useful advantage for the Government

is that it is not the only saviour. Indeed, doughty John Prescott, deputy leader of the Labour Party, takes credit for inventing the idea. Industrialists are more guarded in their support, particularly since right now the PFI is not delivering the contracts expected, but if in the end it results in more work than the public sector would have put up for grabs on its own, then they are happy too.

Sometimes this kind of consensus is a Good Thing: think of the new-found bipartisan accord on keeping inflation under control, together with sustaining the institutional changes, in particular those to the Bank of England, that have added credibility to this objective. As often as not, however, a blanket consensus hides a conspiracy of silence, in which the various parties have very different motives in backing a policy.

So it is with the PFI. Labour backs the scheme because it sees it as a way of escaping the tyranny of the public sector borrowing requirement and so boosting public investment. The Conservatives back the initiative because it allows them to cut public investment - while claiming they haven't. Industry sees the PFI as a backdoor entry to nice juicy contracts. Everyone loves the PFI then. But who eventually picks up the bill?

Answer: the taxpayer. Except that under the PFI, the bill is pushed into the future. The public sector no longer contracts to buy assets; instead it enters into agreements to

purchase services. Not a penny is paid until those services start to be provided, so under the cash-based public accounts, not a penny is shown in the projections of public expenditure until that happens.

The official rationale for the Private Finance Initiative is that this further extension of market disciplines into the public sector stands or falls on value for money. A PFI scheme must satisfy this criterion if it is to go ahead. Top departmental civil servants in their capacity as accounting officers and the National Audit Office can be relied upon to police the new practice.

Despite these protestations, which include claims of substantial savings and better quality services on early deals, serious doubts remain. Whatever the efficiencies the private sector can deliver, it will always face substantially higher borrowing costs than the Government.

A further worry is that departments are locking themselves into long-term, inflexible contracts for services which may become redundant. The public sector may find itself tied into onerous contracts for services that are no longer needed.

But the biggest concern by far is that the PFI is for the Government just another form of the never-never. MPs must insist that the capital costs of PFI contracts are included in next year's public expenditure figures. Otherwise, claims of spending control compared with previous years will increasingly lose credibility.

Contractors warn 15,000 jobs face axe

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Civil engineers predicted yesterday that 10,000 to 15,000 jobs would be lost this year because a slowdown in roadbuilding orders is causing a deepening slump in the industry.

John Hackett, the director-general of the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, blamed the government for the downturn because of a slowing in the award of roadbuilding and maintenance contracts.

Mr Hackett said that the Highways Agency business plan had been revised downward for the 1995-96 year, and now included only one start on a major road scheme compared with eight announced at the start of the financial year. Maintenance had also been trimmed back and some smaller contracts already out to tender had been shelved.

Mr Hackett said: "In the present state of the market it is a severe blow to these companies to have incurred thousands of pounds in tendering costs, then to be told that contracts will not be awarded."

He added: "The transport minister's announcement, and these actions by the Highways Agency, are accelerating the decline in road construction and maintenance that is dragging down the whole of civil engineering."

The contractors also blamed slippages in awarding design, build, finance and operate (DBFO) contracts - part of the government's private finance initiative - as a contributory factor. But a spokesman said the slippage was only three months and was not as important to the industry's problems as the straightforward cut in the number of government contracts awarded.

The spokesman blamed these cuts on a hiatus resulting from the national transport debate inaugurated by Dr Brian Mawhinney when he was transport secretary. "The road versus rail debate should have happened years ago. Our members were left waiting." The debate played into the hands of the Treasury, opening the way for a fall in spending on roads, he said.

The contractors, who employ

130,000 people, are to meet Dr Mawhinney's successor, Sir George Young, on Monday to discuss ways of speeding up the award of contracts, including the preparation of a standard set of contracts for DBFO projects.

The prediction of a deepening slump came from the latest quarterly survey of federation members. Only one in five firms was resisting the downward trend.

Mr Hackett said the most striking feature of the results was the continuing low level of invitations to tender for future work, which pointed to a greater fall in workload later in 1996. The percentage of firms reporting a fall in invitations is the highest for 15 years, while the percentage reporting more invitations is the lowest for the same period.

Mr Hackett added "This, and a succession of recent government announcements and actions by public sector clients, have created a situation of considerable uncertainty and concern over the outlook for civil engineering later this year."



Heading for a slump: Civil engineers say that invitations to tender are at their lowest for 15 years. Only one big road scheme will start this year

Photograph: Brian Harris

There is, however, a slight pick-up in the number of firms reporting better current order books, because of higher orders from the water industry. But for every firm doing better there are two doing worse. Mr Hackett said more orders for water and

sewerage works did not make up for the decline in orders for transport infrastructure that provided the greatest part of the civil engineering workload. The industry knew there would be more work later in the year on the first DBFO contracts, but

that would not make up for the cuts in public spending.

The survey showed improvements in the circumstances of smaller contractors - with fewer than 100 workers on sites - but no change or a worsening for all the larger firms.

IN BRIEF

Bass family lifts Sotheby's stake

Sotheby's Holdings, the parent company of the auction house group, has confirmed that a group including members of the Bass family in America, now owns 7.7 per cent of the shares.

Electronic nose sniffs out smaller loss

AromaScan, maker of the "electronic nose", is in detailed talks with prospective partners to exploit the company's core technology. No further details were disclosed, but the company said it was confident about full-year progress after announcing losses cut from £819,000 to £683,000 in the six months to October.

Rebel bales out of Locker

John Carr, rebel shareholder in Thomas Locker (Holdings), baled out yesterday, selling his remaining 11.6 per cent holding. Mr Carr has been a thorn in the side of the family-dominated engineering company since he acquired a 22.6 per cent stake last May and attempted to prevent the reverse takeover of Pentre, an industrial drums maker. But his objections were rejected by other shareholders when they approved the Pentre deal earlier this month.

Greig Middleton offshore business sold

King & Saxson, is selling the Channel Islands business of its Greig Middleton stockbrokers to Collins Stewart for an initial £1.8m. At the end of April, the net assets were valued at £1.7m. Pre-tax profits for the 12 months to April were £416,000.

Standard Chartered plans sale of HK unit

Standard Chartered, the UK-based bank with extensive Asia operations, is in discussion with Nava, the finance arm of the Thai Military Bank, over the sale of its Hong Kong-based unit Standard Chartered Securities.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Cancer scare shakes Medeva

Our suggestion earlier this month that an investment in Medeva, the drugs group, could prove exciting has already been borne out by events. Unfortunately the subsequent one-fifth fall in the share price, even after yesterday's 5.5p uptick to 223p, is not what we had in mind.

The sudden change in sentiment was prompted by last week's warning from the US Food and Drug Administration that Medeva's best-selling behaviour-modifying drug, Methylphenidate, could potentially cause cancer. This bolt from the blue came after tests on the 40-year-old drug, which treats so-called attention deficit disorder. The tests showed a higher than expected incidence of a rare liver cancer after laboratory rats and mice were treated at 30 times the normal dose over two years. Five male mice out of a sample of 70 developed tumours. The FDA described these findings as only a "weak signal" of the drug's potential for cancer, but has called for doctors to be notified and warnings to be printed on the packaging.

Bill Bogie, Medeva's chief executive, points out that research has shown that the sort of liver disease in question is normally apparent by the age of four in humans, while Methylphenidate is only prescribed from six and above. He also stresses the FDA's continued belief that Methylphenidate is a safe and effective drug.

But the share price reaction shows just how vulnerable Medeva remains to bad news. The latest tidings come just as Medeva was rehabilitating itself in the City after a 1993 profits warning halved its mar-

ket value. Continued growth of Methylphenidate and the prospects for a range of new products ranging from a generic metered-dose inhaler for asthma to Hepagene, a vaccine for hepatitis B, spurred the shares' 39 per cent outperformance against the rest of the stock market last year.

The problem is that the balance between risk and reward is very finely poised at Medeva. Methylphenidate is crucial in the short term, representing as it does all the group's sales growth and a substantial proportion of profits. NatWest Markets calculates that a halving of the drug's expected rate of expansion to 13 per cent in 1996 would cut Medeva's earnings growth from 16 per cent to 6 per cent this year.

The deceleration means profits would rise from an estimated £79m last year to just £86m in 1996, compared with consensus estimates of around £95m, raising the prospective multiple from 11 to 13. That is still not high for a fast-expanding drugs company, but there are plenty of other problems.

Medeva's new inhaler has now lost the race to be the first on the US market to use albuterol - generic Ventolin - after having approval from the authorities last month. Competition is set to intensify with the imminent introduction by Glaxo Wellcome and Schering-Plough of generic versions of their own patented products. Elsewhere, several other new Medeva products are caught up in patent litigation.

Law suits are not uncommon in the pharmaceuticals world, but provide a degree of uncertainty at a time when Medeva is also about to change its chairman and

finance director. The shares could drift for several months while the effect of the latest news becomes apparent.

British Borneo rights on track

When a company, with shares trading at 378p, stages a two-for-five rights issue at 310p, the arithmetic points to a notional ex-rights price of 359p. It is quite some indication of the enthusiasm in the City for the oil explorer British Borneo that in just those circumstances yesterday, its shares actually jumped to 410p.

Since 1989 British Borneo has transformed itself from what was essentially an investment trust, a portfolio of oil company shares, into a well-regarded and focused oil exploration and production company. The budding of that business, however, has not been at the expense of shareholder value - growing cash flow and earnings have easily funded a good dividend and the share price has quadrupled since the beginning of 1992.

Analysts left yesterday's meeting with the company impressed by its strategy of diversifying out of existing strongholds in the North Sea and shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico and into the Gulf's deeper waters. It is an oil region of immense promise that has attracted a lot of interest.

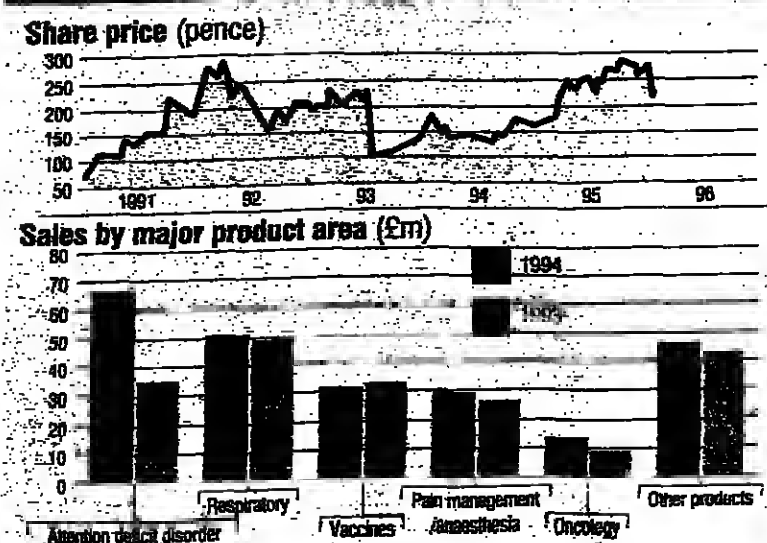
The big players, however, are really only interested in developing fields where they can retrieve more than about 75 million barrels of oil. That leaves plenty of work for smaller companies, especially if they can create cost advantages.

British Borneo believes it has a significant competitive advantage in the area, partly thanks to a recently announced alliance with an American company that has developed a low cost production platform called SeaStar. Thanks to an agreement with Shell to appraise and develop a field called Morphet, Borneo has become one of the first independent exploration companies to establish a significant presence.

The rights issue, to raise £54m, was accompanied by full-year results for the 12 months to December, showing a useful rise in pre-tax profits from £11.4m to £13.6m. Despite higher petroleum revenue tax last year, post-tax earnings increased to 23.1p (21.1p), allowing an unchanged dividend of 7.5p.

Financially strong and with good asset backing, the shares look nicely underpinned but it would be surprising if, following their recent run, they didn't pause for breath.

Medeva: at a glance



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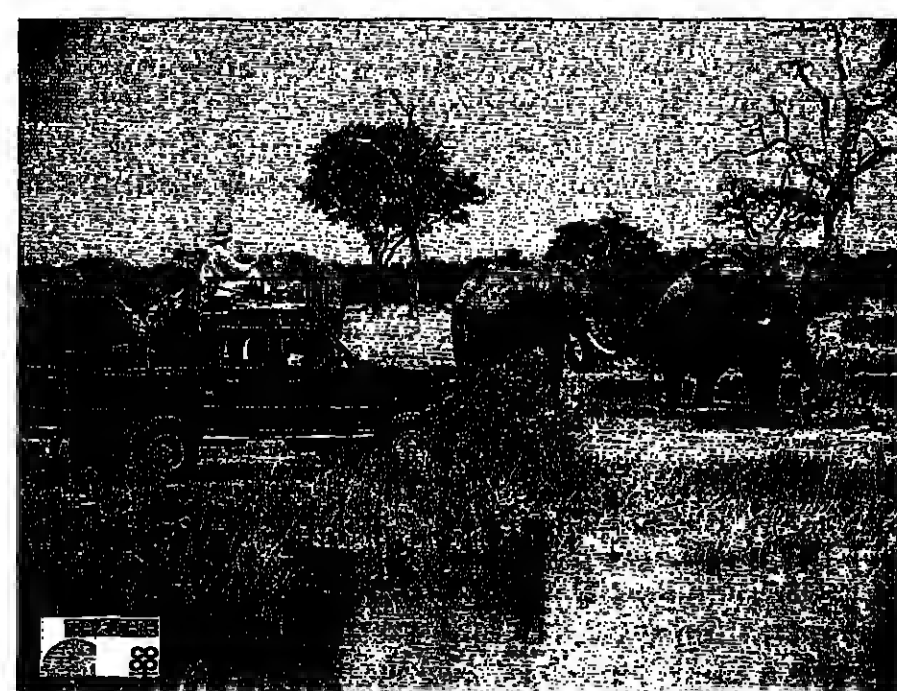
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Calls cost 39p per minute plus a 49p per minute at all other times. Lines close at midnight tonight. Postal entry can be made by sending

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sport



Hylton: European junior title

Bullock and Hylton add to 400 metres equation

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Such is the wealth of 400 metres runners in Britain at the moment that it is likely to be one of the most consistently intriguing events of the season.

As the likes of Roger Black, Mark Richardson, Du'Aine Ladejo and David Grindley train on in earnest for their Olympic year, two of the country's most promising one-lap runners will provide a glimpse of the future today as they face each other in the season's opening indoor international in Birmingham.

Guy Bullock, the 1993 European junior 400m champion, and Mark Hylton, the current

holder of that title, take to the boards in the Bupa International against Russia with everything to run for.

Both have the potential to earn an Olympic place this summer, although Bullock, a 20-year-old Liverpoolian, is realistic in his assessment of how things stand. "I would like to think I would be going to the Olympics, but both Mark and I have got to knock a few people off their perches first," he said.

But, as Hylton points out, the 400m is notorious for inducing illness and injury, and the odds against all four main contenders making it to the Olympic trials in July in top shape must be long. If there are any openings, these two runners, and the likes

of Jamie Baulch, currently training with Colin Jackson in Australia, stand ready to exploit them.

Not that either is immune to the 400m runner's trials. Bullock, a powerful all-round sportsman who excelled at football and rugby as a schoolboy, had most of last season ruined by a hamstring injury and a chest infection. Hylton achieved both his ambitions for last year in winning his junior title and making the British team at the Gothenburg World Championships, but last November he contracted glandular fever and missed a month's training.

Bullock, who has lost a stone in weight recently since following what he describes as a more

"event specific" approach to his training, indicated his return to form at the Birmingham New Year Games as he broke 47 seconds in a runaway victory.

Although Bullock no longer shares a coach with Grindley—he switched back to Alan Prestcott from Chris Butler recently—he still trains regularly with the British record holder.

Hylton gave notice of his own return to fitness last week in taking the Scottish indoor title in 47.35sec, one hundredth of a second outside the championship best. The 19-year-old from Windsor has a similar training set-up to Bullock, working with a more established one-lap runner in Richardson, last year's European Cup champion.

With many of Britain's more established athletes still training abroad, this team includes seven new internationals, including Hylton's 17-year-old Windsor club-mate, Lesley Owens, who also competes at 400m.

Neil Caddy, whose victory over a strong 2,000m field at the Durham cross-country event on 31 December was full of promise, also has his first international run-out.

Meanwhile Judy Oakes, who first competed for Britain before Hylton was born, will make her 73rd appearance for Great Britain—an all-time record.

The 37-year-old shot putter, whose first international appearance was on 31 January 1976, will surpass the mark

held by the current British team manager, Verona Elder.

Oakes, who came out of her second retirement to win a second Commonwealth title in 1994, became the first person to exceed an Olympic standard in 1996 when she recorded 18.11 metres on 6 January.

"It's a special milestone in my life because I've supported my sport for a very long time," said Oakes, who is hoping to reach the final at what will be her third Olympics.

"I think it is going to be hard for anyone to beat the record because there are fewer international matches nowadays. Besides, it's taken me 20 years. I don't think anyone else would be crazy enough to want to do that."



Bullock: Back to best form

Chang and Becker in final battle

Tennis

Michael Chang has only Boris Becker to beat to end his seven-year wait for a second grand slam title after trouncing the defending champion, Andre Agassi, in straight sets in the Australian Open semi-finals in Melbourne yesterday.

However, Becker, who won the title in 1991, will be no pushover after beating the unseeded Australian veteran Mark Woodforde 6-4, 6-2, 6-0 in only 1hr 38min to set up a final against the 23-year-old world No 5. Chang, who won 6-1, 6-4, 7-6, mastered the almost gale-force conditions better than his compatriot and was happy to play a waiting game as Agassi unleashed a string of uncharacteristic errors.

Chang not only used his new, longer racket to devastating effect with 13 aces but was all over the court, running down potential winners, varying the pace of the game with clever top-spin and waiting for the Agassi mistakes.

Agassi obliged and conceded that the wind was a nightmare. "It was one of the windiest days I've ever played in a grand slam tournament," he said. "The wind was kind of playing havoc out there. In a windy situation, a player with a lot of footwork like Chang has the advantage."

Agassi, who had stumbled down a spiral staircase before his first-round match and injured his knee, said he felt flat, a feeling reflected in an astonishing 60 unforced errors. "I don't think anything has been 100 per cent the whole tournament," said Agassi, who played three gruelling five-setters on his way to the semi-final.

"Sometimes your eyes are

bigger than your stomach," Brad Gilbert, Agassi's coach, said of his belief that his charge could win this tournament again. "His body just didn't have it for him today. I think he was tired after playing 22 sets in this tournament. The adrenalin pulled him through a few matches but today he hit the wall."

Down two sets, Agassi showed only glimpses of the form that saved him from defeat in the quarter-final against Jim Courier, a win that gave him the points to wrest back the No 1 spot from Pete Sampras.

The Las Vegas battler back from an eight-game losing streak in the second set to salvage some pride, and then broke Chang's booming serve in the third to set up a 4-1 lead.

But Agassi's errors kept mounting and his game cracked beneath the weight of them mid-way through the third set when he hit a forehand long to give Chang the break back and send the match into a tie-break, which Chang took 7-1.

Chang, who is striving for a second grand slam title after winning the French Open as a 17-year-old, said no one could rest on their ranking. "I think it shows the depth of men's tennis now. If you are No 1 in the world it does not mean you are safe any more."

Despite the crushing nature of his defeat, Agassi still backed Becker for his second title here. "I think Boris has a game that can take Chang's speed out of the equation to a certain degree and a guy like Boris serves well. When he's holding, he's good enough to beat anybody."

Becker, the fourth seed, was brutal in his defeat of Woodforde, who had surprised everyone, including himself, in winning his



Sonic boomer: Boris Becker drives past Mark Woodforde yesterday to reach tomorrow's final against Michael Chang

Photograph: AP

way to a first grand slam semi-final at the 38th attempt.

Becker ignored sentiment and a partisan crowd to blast Woodforde off the court, appropriately wrapping up the Centre Court match with two aces in a third-set whitewash.

"Boris had one of those days," Woodforde said. "When probably God could have been out there on the other end and he would have beaten him easily."

The 28-year-old German, who has not won a grand slam tournament since his 1991 victory at Flinders Park, was asked afterwards how hungry he was for a sixth grand slam title. "Since I haven't been eating for the last couple of years, I'm quite hungry. I was quite close last year at Wimbledon and I

couldn't manage it, but I'm in the final again and I'm going to take another shot at it," he said.

But the world No 4, who has put behind him a run of poor form at the Australian Open since winning the title, now comes up against an in-form player who has not dropped a set in six matches on the way to a third grand slam final.

England's Martin Lee and James Trotman are through to the boys' doubles final at the Australian Open. They defeated the Swedish pair Matthias Hellstrom and Bjorn Rehnqvist 7-5 6-2 in the semi-finals yesterday. Lee, 18, and his 16-year-old partner, Trotman, won the boys' doubles at Wimbledon last year. Results, Sporting Digest, page 27

Size does make a difference

JOHN ROBERTS

As a 5ft 9in Christian, Michael Chang takes inspiration from the story of David and Goliath. Competing against big-serving opponents of 6ft 4in and above, however, prompted him to try to even things up a little. So he added an inch to the length of his racket.

This was quite in order. The rules allow for a racket to be up to 32in, and Chang's is 29in. But the American's success provoked the authorities to think again, fearing that the goliaths of the game might retaliate by reaching for the biggest club.

As a consequence, a motion seeking to limit the length of rackets to 29in is due to be submitted to the International Tennis Federation's annual meeting in June.

Most rackets are 27in or 28in long, but, as the current issue of *ITF News* points out: "A rival some 10 inches taller—like Todd Martin—using a 32in racket, would serve the ball from more than a foot higher than Chang using his current racket."

Chang acquired the weapon early in 1994. He took time to adjust to the difference, but persisted with characteristic determination. Maintaining his place in the world's top 10, the

23-year-old gradually increased the potency of his serve and started hitting a surprising number of aces.

Technology has helped, but so has Chang's revised approach to the game. "I spend a heck of a lot more time practising my serve," he says. "When I was younger I used to concentrate on hitting groundstrokes, but when you can win a few free points you don't have to work so hard in every game."

Chang, denied a triumph by Thomas Muster at the French Open last June, has advanced impressively to the Australian Open final. Tomorrow's opponent is Boris Becker, a mere 6ft 3in.

Christie cruises to victory

Linford Christie won his first 100 metres race of the year with impressive ease at the Adelaide Grand Prix yesterday.

Running into a strong headwind, the Olympic champion dominated the race from the 40-metre mark and crossed the line in a hand-timed 10 seconds dead. The time is worth the equivalent of around 10.25sec timed electronically. Australia's Tim Jackson was second in 10.3.

Christie has yet to reveal if he will run in the Atlanta Olympics. He has spent the past month in Australian training, increasing speculation that the Olympics will be his swansong. "I just want to go out with a bang this year," Christie said. "I'm in better shape than last year and I'm very, very strong at the moment."

Colin Jackson won the 110m hurdles in 13.39 despite running into a headwind of 2.7mps. "I'm really happy to turn in a performance like that so early in the year," Jackson said. "Going into that headwind I thought 13.6 would have been a good performance." Jackson's fellow Welshman, Paul Gray, the Commonwealth bronze medalist, was second in 14.04.

Melinda Gainsford, of Australia, won the women's 100m in 11.56 and the 200m in 23.33, while her compatriot, Cathy Freeman, took the 400m in 50.96. Paul Biak of Kenya won the men's 3,000m in 7min 48.09sec.

TODAY'S NUMBER

450,000

The number of tickets that have been sold on the domestic market for football's European Championship finals in England in June. Only 90,000 remain for the entire 31-match programme involving 16 countries.

Questions of Sport

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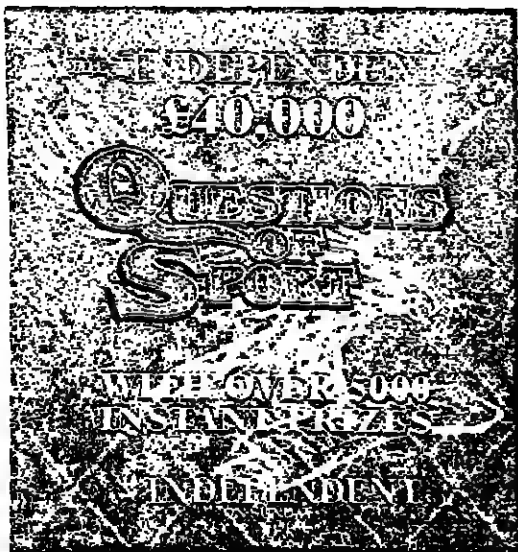
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THE INDEPENDENT

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Today we are playing the section of the card dated Saturday 27 January. Below are three sporting questions, each with three possible answers coded as A, B and C. Scratch off your answer to Question One, either A, B or C in the Q1 column then repeat for Q2 and Q3.

THE QUESTIONS

Q1 Who is the coach of the Welsh national rugby union team?

A: Kevin Bowring
B: Terry Holmes
C: Alex Evans

Q2 Which former champion Flat-race jockey retired in 1995?

A: Joe Mercer
B: Willie Carson
C: Lester Piggott

Q3 Which 1984 Olympic gold medalist has been on the books of Mansfield Town FC this season?

A: Steve Redgrave
B: Sebastian Coe
C: Daley Thompson

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[illegible]

sport

FA CUP FOURTH ROUND: Distinguished member of Wembley hall of fame meets old adversaries today. Guy Hodgson reports

Porterfield back to haunt Leeds

Maybe when you have got 27 of the things, you can afford to be a bit wacky with them. When Colin Todd was asked this week about FA Cup finals, he said he would gladly have sacrificed some of his England caps to have played in one. The Bolton Wanderers manager did not presume to put a value on the winning goal at Wembley.

Not that he would have to go far to get an estimate. The club president, Nat Lofthouse, scored twice in Bolton's 2-0 win over Manchester United in 1958, while Todd's newly appointed coach, Ian Porterfield, got the most famous goal of his life against Leeds United in the final of 1973. FA Cup glory runs vigorously through the corridors of Burnden Park.

Porterfield, 50 next month, took on what most would assume is the nearest thing to mission impossible - helping keep Bolton in the Premiership - three weeks ago and, fate being what it is, almost the first thing he was confronted with was the FA Cup fourth-round draw against, of all teams, Leeds. Memories of 23 years ago came flooding back.

In 1973 he was part of a Sunderland team whose Cup run fired imaginations beyond those

normally stirred by events on a football field. Among the Second Division's relegation candidates at Christmas, they were transformed by the appointment of Bob Stokoe as manager, sweeping past the then might of

'I was one of the lucky ones who achieved something that many people dream of'

Manchester City and Arsenal on the way to Wembley.

There, every logical argument suggested the Wearside dream would end. The opponents in the final were a Leeds team whose image was the antithesis of romance. They were hugely skilled but had a frowning hardness that had all but killed affection outside West Yorkshire.

For six years running they had finished in the top three in the First Division and were champions the following season. Every Leeds player at Wemb-

le was an international but that could not insure them against the whim of Cup fortune.

Porterfield, whose right foot was largely for standing on, used it to volley the winner while at the other end Jim Montgomery invited comparisons with Gordon Banks' breathtaking save against Pelé three years previously by keeping out a shot from Peter Lorimer. The country, inured to the charms of a brilliant Leeds side, rejoiced.

Alan Huby, in the *Sunday Express*, wrote: "It was not so much the Cup final of the century as a shattering CRASH which could be heard throughout the world of football. Soccer has never known - or seen - anything like it. It was the Sunderland miracle... the Roker explosion that destroyed Leeds, the overwhelming favourites, in the biggest Wembley upset of them all."

Even at the time Porterfield kept a grip on his excitement, describing the goal thus: "I just turned and whacked it. I knew as soon as I connected that no keeper could stop it. Although, come to think of it, Jimmy Montgomery probably would have done. What a game he had."

Now the owner of what, for a fleeting moment, was the most famous right foot in football is reticent to talk about memories. "I don't want to take attention away from Colin and the players at Bolton," he said. "It was a long, long time ago. I hit it right, I hit it sweet and it went in. These things happen in football."

"I was one of the lucky ones who achieved something many people dream of. It was nice for me, it was nice for the family but it was nice for a lot of others too. Particularly Bob Stokoe, who did such a terrific job with us but most of all the people of Sunderland. It was no more special for me than for others."

Porterfield arrived at Bolton after a managerial journey that took him to Rotherham, Sheffield United, Aberdeen, Reading and Chelsea. The last appointment ended with his dismissal in 1993, which probably ranks as the worst point of his career, but one he confronts without rancour. "You have your bad moments," he said with a low voice that still carries a strong Scottish



Schemer: Ian Porterfield, the Bolton coach, hopes to bring about Leeds' downfall again at Burnden Park this afternoon

Photograph: Neal Simpson



Porterfield celebrates the most famous goal of his life in the 1973 FA Cup final

Photograph: Colorsport

accent. "Football's always been about ups and downs but I've always been a positive person. For every winner there has to be a loser. I roll my sleeves up and work hard to put things right."

Nowhere more so than at his next job after Stamford Bridge, in Zambia where he coached a national side which had lost 18 players in a plane crash to within a match of making the World Cup of 1994. A draw against Morocco in Casablanca would have earned them a place in the United States, but they lost.

Porterfield then coached a club side in Saudi Arabia but was available when Bolton dismissed Roy McFarland as joint manager early in the New Year. "I've known Colin since we played together at Sunderland," he said. "I knew from coming here as a player and a manager that this has always been a beautiful

place in terms of the welcome you receive. Right from Nat Lofthouse down. Whether you win, lose or draw you're well received. There's good continuity, everyone seems settled here."

beaten 3-0 in the third round of the Cup and in the Premiership there has been a 1-0 win over Wembley and a creditable 2-1 defeat at Newcastle.

Burnden Park has been re-

'I knew from coming here as a player and a manager that this has always been a beautiful place in terms of the welcome you receive'

Nice environment, lovely people. That's why I didn't have to think too hard about coming here."

Porterfield has a five-month contract that will be reviewed by club, manager and coach in the summer although results since his arrival have shown an improvement. Bradford City were

ceiving letters from Tyneside since then, saying that Bolton are among the best sides to visit at St James' Park this season, although Bolton are fed up with getting plaudits and no wins. A truly dreadful performance that yields three points would probably be preferable to Porterfield.

To blow it from here would be so tragic... so utterly typical

Sky's decision to cover the derby between Queen's Park Rangers and Chelsea was one of those rare occasions when television abetted rather than hindered match-going fans. The extra 24 hours to sleep off New Year's Eve revelries meant that Blues supporters saw 1996 in with a spring in their stride. In previous years we have always seemed to have to drag ourselves out of bed at some ungodly hour for an 11am kick-off. I found myself sitting next to a father and son who both supported Rangers. The boy was about eight and spent the half-hour before kick-off asking me questions about how Chelsea had been playing during the season, then dissecting my answers with his father to try and provide himself with the reassurance that the Superhoops were going to win three points in the battle against relegation.

The first half was the worst performance I have witnessed by two Premiership sides this season - countless passes went woefully astray. Then Bradley Allen scored a gem in the 70th minute and celebrated wildly. Matthew Brazier's own goal deflated him somewhat but, as the boy kept telling me: "A point in a derby game has got to be considered a good result."

With the scoreboard clock having been reading 90 for

FAN'S EYE VIEW

No 134
Chelsea
JON LADD

what seemed like an aeon, Paul Furlong rose and slotted in the winner. I rose as one with the massed Chelsea ranks to salute the victory.

When I looked down I saw the boy, he was agitated and then held his face in his hands so that no one would see him crying. As the final whistle went I put an arm on his shoulder. I've been there enough times with Chelsea to know the emptiness that defeat brings. "It'll get better," I said, but I knew he didn't believe me.

The following Sunday found me nearly hoarse from screaming Chelsea to win an unlikely victory against Newcastle in the FA Cup. It seemed highly improbable that the team of the moment would make the same mistake they had a month earlier when we had beaten them in the league, but despite squandering a handful of chances and some increasingly nervous defending, we led 1-0 deep into injury-time. As the ball drifted out for a goal kick, my heart soared. I knew that as the ball

crossed high over the halfway line that the referee would blow his whistle and we would be in the fourth round.

Dimitri Kharin's kick defied description as did the fact that, rather than stay on his line and let the defence close Les Ferdinand down, he ran forward, opening his legs just wide enough for the ball to be poked through them.

I looked desperately for a linesman's flag and then to the referee; perhaps he had blown the final whistle before the ball had gone in. Chelsea kicked off and shattered those fragile illusions. I put my head in my hands and for a minute I was eight again.

And so the story almost ends. A final twist was provided when the draw decreed that in the fourth round QPR would play Newcastle (or Chelsea). Three of us travelled together to the replay. One of the party "had a feeling," sadly the last time he made that pronouncement we had lost 4-1 at home to Manchester United.

It was a brilliant match but, at 2-1 down with two minutes to go, when Ruud Gullit hooked the ball past Pavel Srnic, it was difficult to tell who was the most amazed, the Newcastle fans that we had the temerity to do to them what they had done to us, or ourselves that they had let us.

No more goals meant the game would be decided by penalties. Last year we had lost to Millwall through the dreaded spot kick. Srnic was playing a blinder and we were strangers in a strange land. On the whole, things had looked better.

Peter Beardsley missed, then Kevin Hitchcock saved Steve Watson's shot and after four penalties we were 2-0 up. To blow it from here would be so tragic. To blow it from here would be typical Chelsea.

When Eddie Newton's shot went in everything stopped for a second. He stood smiling at us and we grinned back. Then Wise dashed forward from the halfway line and pandemonium ensued.

On leaving the stadium the Newcastle fans wished us well for the rest of the competition and we told them they'd win the championship. I recognised the tears in their eyes... but this time they were different to the tears in mine.

Clubs succeed in reversing Uefa ban

Rick Parry, the Premier League chief executive, was a relieved man after Tottenham and Wimbledon had their European ban overturned - and he then set his sights on restoring England's lost Uefa Cup place.

Parry and Graham Kelly, his Football Association counterpart, had flown to Geneva yesterday to support the two London clubs in their appeal against the ban - ruling them out of European competition the first time they qualified in the next five years - imposed for their half-hearted participation in last summer's Intertoto Cup.

That appeal, accompanied by a wealth of documentary evidence, was successful, with fines of £90,000 for Spurs and £60,000 for Wimbledon levied instead. The fines, which with the costs add up to around £180,000, will be shared equally between the 20 Premiership clubs.

Parry indicated that the next step would be to try to regain the Uefa Cup place taken away from England because of the attitude of Spurs, Wimbledon and Sheffield Wednesday to the much-derided competition.

"There isn't an obvious route of appeal because this was a decision made by Uefa's executive committee but we're going to ask them gracefully if they will reconsider," he said. "I don't see this as a kind of victory," Alan Sugar, the Tottenham owner, said. "All we have done is get back

to the position that 90 other clubs in England have naturally every year, the right to earn a place in Europe."

For Tottenham, the value of a successful run in Europe next season could be in excess of £4m, dwarfing their share of the fine. But Sugar stressed that his club had still paid the price for doing the decent thing.

"The reason we entered was to protect British football from the punitive measures of banning all our clubs from Europe that could have devastated the game in this country," he said. "I feel it's a bit like us being accused of robbing a bank when we hadn't, being found guilty, but then being told not to worry because the police would pay the fine."

For Wimbledon, there was a degree of disappointment that they had not been cleared totally and Ned Hammam, brother of the club owner, Sam, had another metaphor. "It's like putting out a fire that we didn't start," he said.

Asked if English clubs would take part in the tournament in future, Kelly replied: "You never say never. You don't know what the situation will be in the future."

Parry added: "We've already decided that we won't take part this summer because of the European Championship. We have learned our lesson now, though. If we're going to take part, we will do so properly - we won't get it wrong again."

TEAM NEWS

Bolton v Leeds

Fairclough returns to Bolton after suspension but fellow defender Taggart (ankle) is unavailable. Striker De Freitas is added to the squad. Leeds are concerned over the fitness of defenders Doherty (right), Johnson (left) and Pemberton (left). Chester, Ford and Beasley are suspended, while Watson, Whelan and Redmond are on international duty. Manager Wilkinson must choose between Sealey and Liddle in goal.

Charlton v Brentford

Defender Humphrey is available again for Charlton after suspension but may struggle to replace Brown. Brentford are forced into one change in midfield. Connolly, on loan from West Ham, is ineligible. Martin, Anderson and Ormrod compete for his place.

Everton v Port Vale

Barton manager Ray Jones names an unchanged starting line-up, but has three changes in the substitutes. Berahino, who is injured, is struggling to shake off a thigh injury. Midfielder Tubb is expected to recover from a dead leg.

Huddersfield v Peterborough

Winger Rowe is likely to make the Huddersfield starting line-up at Collingwood. Defender Clark is in line to return to Peterborough after a knee injury. Sedgmore is expected to keep his place.

Millwall v Wimbledon

Boro's player-manager Robinson has been ruled out by a calf injury and Andre Green is doubtful. The Dons have in-form midfielder. Egan is suspended but there could be a surprise Cup appearance from Jones. Striker Dicko (back) is doubtful.

Merton Forest v Oxford United

Forest look certain to be without captain Pearce (head). The likely replacement is Phillips. Oxford will be without captain Ford and winger Angel who have hamstring injuries. Marsh deputises for Ford. Mid-manager Smith has still to decide who will partner Moody.

Reading v Manchester United

Reading have goalkeeping problems. Mithailov (thigh) faces a late fitness test while Hammond (chicken-pox) is recovering. Wdowczyk (toe) and Achilles tendon) is ruled out. Jones and Gilles are likely to be called up, with Bernal switching to the centre of defence. Reserve goalkeeper Cotton and McClair have been added to United's squad. Pallister (back) misses the 11th game.

Southampton v Liverpool

Shrewsbury's manager Davies, is switching into fitness checks on captain defender Walton (ankle) and striker Spink (hamstring). Liverpool manager Evans keeps the team that beat Leeds 5-0.

Sheff Wed v Wolves

Goalkeeper Walker, captain Meehan and Clive Wilson are declared unavailable. Central defender (ankle) is set to be replaced by Wolves and likely to replace Meehan.

West Ham v Gillingham

Gordon has been included in the 15-man squad which will play at Upton Park. Striker Watson may be recalled to partner Walters and Shipperley in attack. Rivers will provide the attacking spearhead for Gillingham who will be without captain and central defender Moseley (toe).

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TOMORROW

Sheff Wed v Aston Villa

Gordon covers with European Cup and League Championship honours. Wolves have a busy day with Villa but the afternoon game is the former's last in the competition. The Blades build on their third round defeat of Arsenal. Walsley manager Line has named a 2-1 side. Striker Johnson continues to struggle behind a struggling defence. There is no news of a player who has a serious knee injury.

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Edwards freed to tackle Bramley and continue his Cup run

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

Wigan will have their captain, Shaun Edwards, available to maintain his record of playing in every Challenge Cup tie since their astonishing run of 42 victories began in 1988.

Edwards' appeal against a one match ban for a high tackle on Bradford's Robbie Paul

succeeded yesterday, leaving him free to face Bramley tomorrow in the fourth round. "Obviously I'm glad I expect to be suspended, but in this case I was innocent."

Bramley, four from the foot of the Second Division at the end of the season last week, can mark back to a famous Cup performance against Wigan in 1984.

Ironically in Edwards' first-

ever tie, they forced a 10-10 draw at the now abandoned McLaren Field, and Wigan, coached by one Alex Murphy, would not even have taken the tie to a replay - and eventually reached Wembley for the first time in 14 years - had it not been for a try from Graeme West, the club's current coach. Bramley will not be as tricky a hurdle this time.

Last season's beaten finalists, Leeds, also seem to have a task

that is well within their compass with an away tie at Swinton. They have James Lowes at scrum-half and Gary Schofield back in his specialist position of stand-off for the match at Gigg Lane, but Harvey Howard is still under suspension.

Just up the road at Rochdale, the Hornets could find Thaito Heath, one of the two amateur clubs to reach this stage, a hand-

ful if the St Helens-based side play as well as they did in beating Chorley in the last round. The new regimes at St Helens and Warrington get an early and demanding test. Saints' new coach, Shaun McRae, is first in the firing line, when his new side take on Castleford today.

McRae is without Joey Hayes, with a hamstring strain, but has Anthony Sullivan back on the wing and other recent absences of the stature of Paul Newlove

and Bobbie Goulding fit again. "They are a very talented bunch of players," McRae said after his first three days in charge. "I'm not trying to build Rome in a day but just offering a bit of guidance when it's needed."

Castleford covered their pitch before the onset of the severe weather and are confident of being able to stage the match.

They will, however, be without their England stand-off,

Tony Smith, whose appeal against a one-match ban was rejected yesterday. Graham Staddon and Gareth Stephens have been named as the half-backs, with Frano Botica feeling that he is not yet ready for the first team.

Warrington's new coach, John Dorahy - no doubt with some advice from the club's other new appointment, Alex Murphy - has made some significant changes for the visit to Oldham,

with Andy Currier and Mark Forster on the wings and Mike Ford restricted to a place on the bench.

The Carlisle second row forward Stuart Rhodes has been banned for five matches.

Rhodes, who has also been fined £50, was placed on report by referee Nick Oddy during his side's 36-6 defeat of amateurs West Bowling in the third round of the Cup nearly a fortnight ago.

Old Firm pair arrive in Lilliput

If dreams of players can take them into the realms of fantasy football before big games, the players and managers of Celtic and Whitehill Welfare may have been struggling to keep the nightmare demons at bay this week.

The two small non-League clubs have been propelled into football's fast lane as they prepare to take on the might of Rangers and Celtic in the third round of the Tennent's Scottish Cup. They await their fate with excitement and dread.

Home advantage has been wrenched from them by officials, who deemed their grounds unworthy of such occasions, and so Pittodrie and Easter Road have been hired.

Keith meet Rangers today, while Whitehill face Celtic tomorrow; the two smallest clubs in the competition facing the biggest. Not surprisingly, the bookmakers have installed Keith as 20,000-1 to lift the trophy.

Jim Hamilton, the Celtic manager, was looking on the bright side this week: "We'd have real nightmares if we looked too closely at the Rangers side and, to be honest, I haven't thought much about them at all yet."

"I'll wait until after lunch on Saturday before talking to the players, although I'm happy Paul Gascoigne is suspended. I would say we are as good as any team in the Third Division and several in the second. If everything was even we wouldn't stand a chance, but this is cup football and you have to hope for the best."

Like any manager in his position, Hamilton has under his charge an assortment of part-time players who will wish only to do their best and be able to walk out of the ground at the end with heads held high.

Their town will be deserted on the day, with 7,500 tickets sold in a place with a population of 5,000. This is the closest Scottish football gets to the small town giant-killing of the FA Cup yet, such is the gulf between top and bottom, genuine cup shocks are isolated events.

"I've never played in front of more than 4,000 and many of the lads are the same," said Scott Taylor, the Celtic playmaker. "I hope we don't get stage fright on the day and so far everyone I've met has either asked for a ticket or told me to make sure

David McKinney on the most distant of outsiders in this weekend's Scottish Cup third round

we keep the score down to six. "I've been daydreaming that in years to come I'll be able to say I scored against Andy Goram and Rangers."

Whitehill Welfare are heading for a sell-out against a resurgent Celtic, and they too can report record ticket sales. For a side which performs to 50 or 60 spectators on an average Saturday, 2,500 tickets sold on the first day of the public sale gives an indication of the level of interest in the area.

On such a momentous day even the manager, Dave Smith, is in danger of being wrapped up in the magic of the cup. He is toying with the idea of getting in on the act, of dusting down the boots and making a farewell bow to the game at the age of 38.

"It would be tempting, but I know I'll be nervous enough just looking over to their dug-out and knowing I'm pitting my wits against Tommy Burns. Celtic have players who have star status draped over them, so we'll be realistic about what we can do, in the knowledge that we'll have to withstand a lot of pressure."

"The days of Berwick Rangers upsetting the mighty Rangers are in the past; Celtic are a professional side with professional players. "I have players who are determined to show they can play at a higher level, while I have ambitions myself to move on in management, and this is the platform we have been waiting for. In addition, the revenue from this one game will keep the club going well into the next century."

Smith can count on around £50,000 for this game but he is likely to be left counting the cash as a consolation at full time. His goalkeeper, Scott Canby, is no doubt as to his task on the day.

"My worst nightmare is to let in double figures. I'm not saying I'll be happy to let in seven or eight goals but 10 or more would be a disaster. I'll do my



Eight-ball: Nicky Hammond, the Reading reserve goalkeeper, trains yesterday after recovering from chicken pox in the hope of replacing the injured Bulgarian international, Borislav Mikhailov, in today's FA Cup tie against Manchester United at Elm Park

best to keep the score down because I don't want to be remembered as the man who let in 10 or 15 goals against Celtic."

That kind of humiliation is the ultimate fear of any small club when jousting with the giants, and the players of both sides can learn a lesson from Alex Smith, the manager of Clyde, who took both Aberdeen and St Mirren to cup success.

In his days as manager of Stirling Albion, he watched his players go through the build-up to a big cup tie, only to find the occasion fell flat.

"The media had typed up the game for the whole week and I was hoping for a good 90 minutes at the end of it, for the players to remember, but our big day lasted just 20 minutes by which time we were two goals down and the tie was lost."

Hibernian confident of Cup progress

The leading Scottish clubs kick-off on the Cup trail today - weather permitting - and they could still be on the road to Hampden.

The national stadium in Glasgow will be a building site come the date of the final on Saturday 18 May. The Scottish Football Association, however, seems unlikely to move the traditional end-of-season showpiece away from Hampden, despite a cut in capacity.

Only an Old Firm meeting of Celtic and Rangers, and all the pressure for tickets that would create, might force a rethink. "At this stage it is still the intention of the International Committee and the Executive

Committee to carry on playing at Hampden if possible," Jim Farry, the SFA chief executive, said. The ground's old south stand is to be demolished within weeks, leaving the capacity in a three-sided stadium at 34,000.

"The Executive Committee, who decide venues for cup finals and semi-finals, will look at this on a game-to-game basis," Farry added. "Decisions will be based on safety and the suitability for use of Hampden as work progresses. Clubs have carried on using grounds during redevelopment, so why not at the national stadium?"

The under-18 heating at Easter Road should ensure Hibernian take on Kilmarnock in the third round before White-

hill meet Celtic on the same Edinburgh turf tomorrow. Hibernian have not won the Cup for 94 years since beating Celtic 1-0 in 1902. Alex Miller's side look Celtic to a replay in the semi-finals last season but failed at the final hurdle.

They have won only once in the last eight games, but Miller said: "This is not a make-or-break game. The Cup is a one-off and, if we play our best football, we can go through."

Steven Tweed is injured while Darren Dods and Pat McGinlay are suspended, but Gordon Hunter and David Farrell could return. Kilmarnock could be unchanged for the fifth game in a

row after remaining unbeaten in 1996 so far.

The Tynecastle transformation effected by Jim Jefferies has left Hearts in buoyant mood for their campaign, and last week's 3-0 win over Rangers should swell the attendance against Partick across Edinburgh. "It's a different game from Rangers, but, if we score early, I'd expect us to win comfortably," Jefferies said.

Only six games today are expected to beat the weather: Keith v Rangers (at Pittodrie), Ross County v Forfar, Hibernian v Kilmarnock, Hearts v Partick, Hamilton v St Johnstone (at Firhill) and Caledonian Thistle v East Fife.

Broncos in the hunt for Mather

London Broncos are back in the hunt for the England centre Barrie-Jon Mather, who failed in the High Court on Thursday to gain his release from Wigan in order to play in Australia.

Broncos' football manager Robbie Moore said: "We were waiting for clarification of the legal position and now that the player has to return to this country we will be making further inquiries. We are always interested in acquiring top-class players."

The London side have been tracking the 6ft 11in Mather since he was placed on the transfer list by Wigan for £150,000 last November after a contract dispute. The Central Park club maintain that he is under contract to them until 1997.

Lawyers acting for the 22-year-old, who was a member of England's World Cup squad in October, had been trying to free him from his registration with Wigan so that he could join the Australian club Perth Western Reds in March.

Broncos, without a coach since parting company with Gary Grierke on Tuesday, will be without the services of the England winger Iqram Butt for their Challenge Cup visit to Dewsbury tomorrow.

The former Leeds and Featherstone player had a groin operation this week and will be out of action for about six weeks. He hopes to return for the start of the Super League season.

A Scottish consortium are attempting to wrest control of Super League club Workington Town. Bob Jamieson and his business partner Angus Cook had been involved in an attempt to launch rugby league in the borders at Galashiels during the summer. Jamieson is working for three months as Town's marketing director and Cook, a property developer and former director of Dundee FC, has pledged to pull money in the club if they get control.

However, the Workington directors are also talking to two business groups from Cumbria and hope to reach a decision early next month. "We need short-term inward investment and we are looking for a figure to do for us what Jack Walker did for Blackburn and Sir John Hall for Newcastle," Kevin Gorge, the club chairman, said.

The club have transfer-listed the prop, Garry Schuster, at £10,000 after he was unable to agree a new contract for the Super League.

Uefa launches attack on EU

Football

Uefa has launched its strongest attack yet on the European Union's attempt to sweep aside football's transfer and nationality regulations.

National federations continue to debate whether to accept the so-called Bosman ruling, or stand behind Europe's football officials. But the Uefa general secretary, Gerhard Aigner, accused the EU of intransigence and a lack of sensitivity and knowledge of the subject.

He warned that the EU court's insistence that the transfer system and nationality restrictions should be scrapped could destroy the structures of the game in the long term.

"Is it really necessary to take such aggressive action?" Aigner asked in the latest issue of the *Uefa Flash* newsletter. "Football did not introduce requirements in contravention of EU law."

He said it was "legitimate for football's bodies to defend themselves against measures which have a generally negative influence on the development of the sport and are likely to destroy the structures of national football in the long term."

"The very aggressive comments made by representatives of the European Commission some time before the Bosman case showed their fundamentally negative attitude towards football's authorities," Aigner added.

Badminton

The British pair Simon Archer and Julie Bradbury scored an unexpected win yesterday to reach the final of the mixed doubles competition at the South Korean Open in Seoul. Archer and Bradbury, seeded seventh, beat the second seeds, Kim Dong Moon and Gil Young Ah of the host nation, 15-13, 15-9. They are set to meet in the final the South Korean pair Kim Dong Moon and Gil Young Ah.

South African Masters (Sam Lamme Country Club, Port Edward) Leading scores after 36 holes: S. Aigner 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Football Russia's former England defender, has signed a new contract keeping him with Brighton for another month. The 36-year-old ex-Bristol City boss has been on a month-to-month contract since arriving at the Second Division club in September.

South African Masters (Sam Lamme Country Club, Port Edward) Leading scores after 36 holes: S. Aigner 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 3

Gay Meadow prepares to welcome Liverpool

PHIL SHAW



The lower orders had their day in the third round of the FA Cup, with Ipswich, Sheffield United and Charlton humbling the self-styled aristocrats of Blackburn, Arsenal and Sheffield Wednesday. The fourth round tends to be a different matter: when the going gets tough, the toffs get going.

The Toffees of Everton proved a case in point last year, rising from the depths of the Premiership to win at Wembley. No Evertonian would shed tears for Liverpool were they to succumb at Shrewsbury today, least of all Fred Davies.

the Second Division side's manager. In a neat bit of reverse psychology, Davies has had a sign placed above the players' tunnel—similar to the one that has struck fear into visitors to Anfield down the decades—which declares: "This is Gay Meadow".

Shrewsbury, whose squad includes four Scousers, have lost only four of their last 27 games. They also possess a striker with inside knowledge of Liverpool's three-man defence. Steve Anthrobus was a colleague of Phil Babb and Neil Ruddock at Millwall before joining John Scales at Wimbledon. Having scored seven goals in seven years, Anthrobus is ripe for his 15 minutes of fame.

Reading have used six goalkeepers this season, yet none of the three eligible to turn out against Manchester United is fit. The Bulgarian, Borislav Mikhailov, faces a late test on a thigh strain, Simon Sheppard has a broken arm and Nicky Hammond chicken-pox. The latter has volunteered to come out of quarantine and play, proof that Cup fever can still overcome lesser infections.

If Elm Park's keeper crisis is designed to lull United into over-confidence, the sight of a hideously bumpy playing surface should disabuse them of any such notions. Referring to the 20 tonnes of sand spread over it to assist with drainage, the Reading defender Andy Bernal

remarked, with no intentional irony: "Our pitch could be a great leveller".

Port Vale's chances of causing an upset at Everton might have been greater had Joe Royle's team not already suffered a scare against Stockport, although the Potteries club can point to some encouraging auguries.

When they last faced the holders, in 1954, Vale beat Blackpool, including Stanley Matthews, en route to the semi-final. The current side, despite being 19th in the First Division, have won eight and drawn two of the last 12 games.

In the kind of duel which encapsulates the competition's charm, Vale are likely to deploy

the 6ft 4in Gareth Griffiths, a £1,000 buy from Rhyll, against Duncan Ferguson, who cost £4m from Rangers. Ferguson plays on pending the verdict from a judicial review in Edinburgh into whether he must serve the remaining seven games of a 12-match ban from the Scottish FA.

The Cup quicksand has so far claimed four Premiership victims, a total that must at least double before this round is over. Nevertheless, ties between clubs from different levels remain the essence of the competition's appeal. In-form Aston Villa, who have not lifted the trophy in 39 years, are another team with an unenviable task, travelling tomorrow to

Sheffield United, bottom of the First but conquerors of Arsenal.

The ex-files could be a particularly strong factor at Bramall Lane, with United's manager Howard Kendall looking to one of Villa's great stalwarts, Gordon Cowans, to bridge the chasm in quality.

Nor can Tottenham, Southampton or West Ham feel entirely confident today. Spurs' visitors, Wolves, are warning to Mark McGhee's radically different playing style, and will be hoping that Ian Walker does not recover from illness in time to face Steve Bull and co. In that event, Chris Day, 20, would make his debut in goal.

Southampton are on a hiding to nothing against Crewe, who stand second in the Second Division and have several young talents who will not look out of place in the company of Matthew Le Tissier. One, Neil Lennon, is likely to move up to the top level, possibly with Queen's Park Rangers, as and when Crewe go out of the Cup.

West Ham receive Grimsby, sadly no longer accompanied by the shoal of inflatable haddock in the stands. But the Mariners do have a big fish in a small pond in the shape of Ivano Bonetti, late of Juventus, who will be anxious to uphold the honour of South Humberside and Italy on the grand stage.

Asprilla leaves without signing

Football
GUY HODGSON

Newcastle United's £6.7m purchase of Faustino Asprilla was in doubt last night when the Colombian striker flew back to Italy without putting his signature to a contract estimated to be worth £15,000 a week.

Asprilla, 26, whose Italian season has been disrupted by a knee injury, had been in Newcastle to complete the formalities of a move from Parma that would have taken the Premiership leaders' spending to £40m since Kevin Keegan became manager in 1992. These included a medical which, perhaps significantly, was not mentioned as successfully completed when the club issued a press release.

Delivered by the chief executive Freddie Fletcher, it read: "Faustino Asprilla is now returning to Italy and we will be making an application for the appropriate work permit. The player was here to have his medical and to finalise other details, all of which has been done."

The lack of the usual after-

medical news conference was in keeping with the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere in which this whole episode has been undertaken. Asprilla flew in to Teesside Airport on Thursday to avoid those expecting him at Newcastle and he slipped away from St James' Park without facing journalists or supporters.

"I want to do my best for Kevin Keegan," he said in a statement. "Newcastle are a great club who can give me a chance to play in the European Champions' Cup. That is why I am so excited to be joining them."

Referring to the allegations about his past that have surfaced in some newspapers, he added: "I don't care about what is in the past, the slate is wiped clean."

Newcastle's chairman, Sir John Hall, also played down Asprilla's history which includes a shooting incident, an alleged argument with a bus driver resulting in a leg injury and several car crashes.

"I think at times we expect an awful lot of young people," he said. "Kevin rates him very highly and other people believe



Despite the show of togetherness with Newcastle's Terry McDermott, Faustino Asprilla yesterday returned to Italy

Photograph: Newsteam

he is one of the top three players in the world."

Another Newcastle target, David Batty, was yesterday thinking over his options, while insisting that he is not on strike and had not gone absent from

training. The unsettled Blackburn midfielder had a £3.5m move to Newcastle blocked by the Rovers owner, Jack Walker. In contrast, Steve Stone has settled his differences with Nottingham Forest and agreed an

improved three-and-a-half year contract.

Phil Neal has been appointed the manager of Cardiff City 11 months after leaving Coventry. Neal's former Liverpool team-mate,

Ronnie Whelan, has emerged as a front runner for the vacant Republic of Ireland manager's job after being given permission by Southern United to speak to the Football Association of Ireland. Whelan will

first have to oversee the sale of full-back Chris Powell to Derby for £750,000.

Wales begin their World Cup qualifying campaign away to San Marino on Sunday 2 June. Spurs' reprieve, page 26

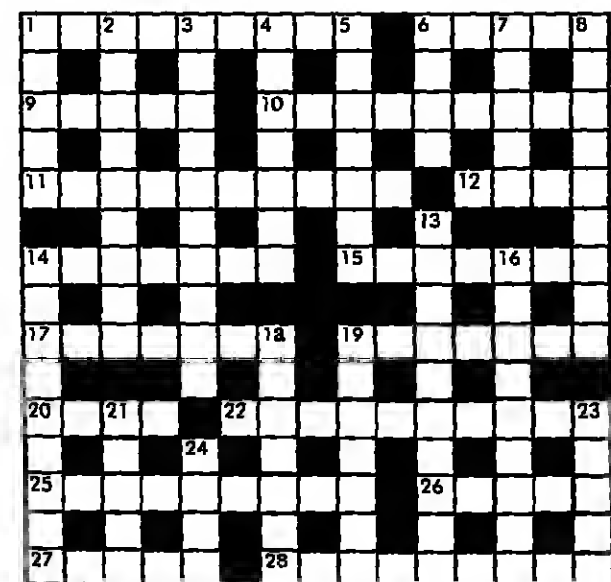
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2894, Saturday 27 January

By Phil

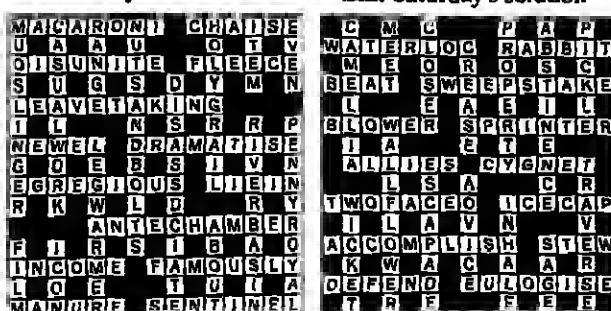
ACROSS

DOWN



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



- 1 Hope to nab rotten thief? (5)
- 2 Notice Italy joining European Union? (5)
- 3 Computer information? (5)
- 4 Useful clue about processing unit, initially (5)
- 5 What economics aim for could be inflation? (9)
- 6 A former world leader whose name is involved (10)
- 7 Have a discussion if removing river from map (4)
- 8 Wind player has most of string instrument in clenched hand (7)
- 9 One of Churchill's names for an overcoat (7)
- 10 Framework made from most of woody plant is ailing, pushed over (7)
- 11 Alcohol - most of that's in single, knocked back (7)
- 12 Host with front displaced has to move slowly (4)
- 13 In infra-red, one line is multi-coloured (10)
- 14 Made up and mock relative (5, 4)
- 15 City with two cathedrals lacking a mere organ (5)
- 16 Delicious last bit of savoury gets to stomach, taking no time (5)
- 17 Bag (ice) within - you want sweetener (9)

- 1 Squal when I get tortured (5)
- 2 Love shown by holy man taken in by dirty cheat (9)
- 3 Sixteen inadequate? Live to encounter 30, capable of more (10)
- 4 North-West Passage transport possibly motivating Le Cabot (3-4)
- 5 Wretched fellow's behead-off? Lesson that's not working (7)
- 6 Gh? One gets almost fresh (4)
- 7 One hard man coming up from Dublin? (5)
- 8 Presumably sharp or flat, but not produced by normal means (9)
- 9 Very old chap - that's me, so healthy, on reflection (10)
- 10 Suitably prepared and excited (9)
- 11 Study tennis-player - one hoarding energy? (9)
- 12 Composer is leading one in support (7)
- 13 Quote to finish up vividly clear (7)
- 14 The best luxury car carries one upward (5)
- 15 Sudden attack of ill-health restricts one in Italian city (5)
- 16 Remain a good person? Yes (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the excellent Larousse Dictionary of Literary Characters worth £25. Answers and 'clues' missing will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: C.W. Thomas, Bristol; P.B.N. Whitehead, London E11; Miss Emma Sturges, Welling-on-Trent; Gerald Cowham, Huddersfield; Stewart and Jane Jones, Northumberland.

Bath and Wigan contest the clash of the codes

One hundred years of mutual antipathy will be laid to rest when Bath and Wigan play each other in a two-match series in May - the first in the North under rugby league rules and the second in the South, possibly at Twickenham itself, under union rules.

Such are the consequences of rugby union's new professionalism and the removal of the taint that union has sought to attach to league since the great split of 1895. The practical benefits of playing these matches may be obscure beyond one code being able to claim a spurious superiority over the other, but serious money will be involved when union's five-times English champions take on league's perennial British champions.

Now that the matches - probably on 8 and 25 May - have been confirmed, television can begin the serious bidding. Goodson Park and Maine Road, homes of Everton and Manchester City respectively, were yesterday touted as possible Northern venues. Failing Twickenham, Bath have

Steve Bale on the historic games which will bring together league and union

enquired about using Cardiff Arms Park.

"Of course it's a great commercial venture," John Quin, the Bath secretary, said last night. "But over and above that, here is the chance for the leading exponents of both codes to pit their wits against each other. At this stage I would have thought it was a one-off, or a two-off if you like, to celebrate the coming-together of the two codes."

Though agreement to stage the matches was confirmed by the clubs yesterday, the Rugby Football Union has yet to give formal blessing through its game-regulation committee. But Richard Mawditt, the Bath chairman, has told other club officers he has the verbal approval of Tony Hallett, the RFU secretary.

Wigan received the Rugby Football League's support a

while ago and already have won a Twickenham date: the Middlesex Sevens on 11 May.

The prospective date of the second match would necessitate postponement of Wigan's Super League fixture against Sheffield Eagles the following day. In fact the League has been lukewarm about the venture and when Bath approached the RFU with a view to using Twickenham they were initially told it would be unavailable due to reseedling.

But the prospect of taking the game to Wales appears to have wrought a change of mind. "When they heard that the Arms Park was being considered," Quin said wryly, "it seems they decided to reallocate their reseedling programme."

Ladbrokes, the bookmakers, reckon the chances of either side being beaten at their own game are remote. Wigan are 1-10 (if you bet £10 you stand to win only £1) to win under league rules, with Bath at 6-1. Bath are the 4-1 favourites to take the union contest, with Wigan at 2-1.

In tomorrow's INDEPENDENT On Sunday

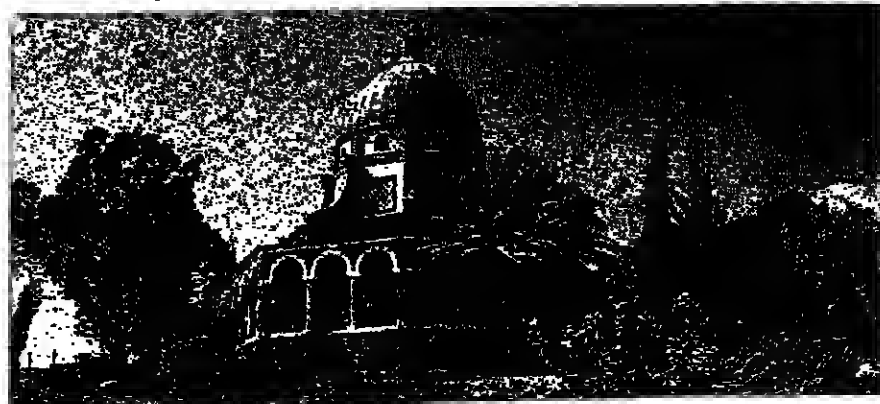


DIARY OF DESPAIR

"As I walked up the caged tunnel to a volley of abuse from the crowd in front of the dressing room, I knew that was it for the series. I was so devastated I left my bag to go back out, put the stumps up and take guard again."

Mark Ramprakash, a disillusioned tourist

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